School Grants and the Right to Education.

The case of the Honduran Community-Based Education Programme

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This publication gathers the results of a study conducted by IIEP- Buenos Aires on the Honduran Programme for Community-Based Education (PROHECO), of the Republic of Honduras, in the framework of the programme "Financing for equity: the contribution of school grants". The research was carried out in 2014, sponsored by the World Alliance for Art Education with the collaboration of the Secretariat of Education of the Honduran Republic and the Instituto de Investigaciones Educativas y Sociales of the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán.

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I. Introduction

This document gathers the findings of the study on the Honduran Programme for Community-Based Education (PROHECO) implemented in the Republic of Honduras since 1998. The case study is part of the research programme "Financing for equity: developing an integral approach to finance educational equity", supported by IIEP-UNESCO since 2010. The Programme seeks to analyse the impact of different financing policies on the quality and equity in education, with special emphasis on educational decentralized systems. The analysis focuses on experiences of financial resource transfer from central government agencies to educational establishments, to be directly managed at school level.

PROHECO is one of the school grant programmes with largest track record in Latin America still under implementation. The study has been conducted by a research team at IIEP UNESCO Buenos Aires Office, with the approval and institutional and logistical support of the Ministry of Education of Honduras. Also, a research team of the Education and the Social Research Institute of the National Pedagogical University Francisco Morazán, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, has been working together with IIEP researchers to develop one of the three components of the research strategy. The research has been conducted between July 2014 and May 2015. Field work was carried out in September and October 2014 and the findings were discussed and validated by Honduran counterparties between March and May 2015.

In the introductory section, school grant programmes are conceptually defined as a modality of indirect, supply-oriented education provision. They are also related to the decentralization process of educational systems. PROHECO is classified as a mixed school grant modality, where funding is conditioned to the articulation of an education demand, in a model governed by community participation in education management. There is a brief description of the Programme before presenting the main aspects of the research methodology.

The second chapter describes the participation of PROHECO in the supply of education in Honduras and offers a comparison with education supply provided by other rural public schools.

The third chapter analyses how the Programme has been introduced into the national political agenda and into the government and management structure of the education system.

The fourth chapter describes the mechanism applied by the central government to transfer the resources to the community for supply funding purposes and proposes an approach to the analysis of the sufficiency and equity of these grants.

The fifth chapter seeks to account for the implementation of the Programme in the territories, from the decentralized levels of the Ministry of Education to schools and community-based associations. Again, situations found in PROHECO schools are compared with those of other rural public schools.

The sixth chapter analyses the profiles of Community-Based Education Associations (AECO) chairpersons and explores the autonomy exercised by these actors.

The seventh chapter promotes an integrated reading of the findings presented in former chapters and organizes the conclusion of the study around three lines of thought. The first one focuses on the contribution of the Programme to Honduran equity and quality in education. The second line reflects on the features of the Programme with respect to community management capacity development. The last one explores the contribution of the Programme to promote more efficient school management.

Findings highlight the significant contribution of the Programme to the expanded coverage in rural areas, with a strong focus on less developed districts. However, they reveal important challenges as to input adequacy and the quality of the educational process developed at these schools. In certain contexts, it is possible to identify limitations in the capacity of community organizations to effectively exercise their autonomy in school management and the ensuing use of such spaces by other territorial actors. And, though the analysis fails to determine the contribution of financial transfers to increase education management efficiency, it establishes a relationship between the

scope and the consolidation of the Programme and its lower costs. Based on these findings and as a result of the exchange with government officials and technicians directly involved in developing PROHECO, the study concludes with some reflections aimed at improving the design and implementation of the Programme.

1. School grant programmes and their relationship with education provision modalities and decentralized processes

Considering that education is a public good, States face, in general, various alternatives to ensure that every citizen, both men and women, has a free access to this universal right. One of these alternatives is that State agents *directly provide* educational services by opening and maintaining educational institutions, hiring and paying educational and administrative staff, purchasing equipment and material, defining curricula, etc. *Indirect provision* appears as the opposed possibility by means of which the State provides funds for this service through private stakeholders, thus withdrawing considerably from day-to-day school management and retaining only regulatory attributions. Briefly, two approaches have been identified within this former line. The first one, known as *demand-oriented funding* implies transferring resources to the families strictly with the purpose of the enrolment of school-age children. The second public funding alternative to the private initiative is *supply-oriented funding*. In this case, the State transfers directly to educational institutions the resources for the provision of services[1].

Although direct provision is still the main method applied to provide educational services around the world, in certain circuits discussing educational policies, particularly in the international community connected to development agencies, the focus of attention has been shifted from indirect provision

1 De Mello e Souza, A. (2003), "Financiamiento de la educación en América Latina. Enseñanzas de la experiencia" en Morduchowicz, Alejandro (org.), *Equidad y financiamiento de la educación en América Latina, Buenos Aires,* IIPE-UNESCO. See also Morduchowicz, A. (2010), *Asignación de recursos en sistemas educativos descentralizados de América Latina*. 1a ed. Buenos Aires, IIPE-UNESCO.

methods with a significant impact on national policies[2]. In the last decades of the XX century, several countries resorted to demand-oriented funding programmes. Later on, specific indirect education supply funding programmes have gained emphasis, expanding at a fast speed, particularly in countries with low education coverage rates. Back in the 1990s, these policies had been adopted in most Central American countries and have extended at a fast speed since the beginning of the XXI century to Asian and African countries, under the so-called school grant programmes. These programmes are the object of the research programme conducted by UNESCO's International Institute of Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO), where this case study falls within.

The proliferation of indirect provision policies –whether demand- or supply-oriented– has mostly paired massive enrolment policies and may be interpreted as an attempt to respond to two important challenges: extending coverage to areas not previously covered by the State and the need to ensure quality of education provided at educational institutions. The first challenge entailed a strengthening of State capacity and, in contexts of fiscal restrictions, has resulted in decentralization processes that reshaped the state's structure and its relationship with the civil society. The challenge for quality, in turn, has been set out by a specific school of thought as a principal-agent problem: the State (principal) lacks efficient tools to monitor the performance of school level actors (agent). In both cases, the indirect provision has been proposed as a theoretically more efficient alternative than direct State provision[3].

In the principal-agent problem, the agent finds incentives to devote fewer efforts than those required to achieve the performance level considered to be optimum by the principal. The global result is the lack of effectiveness, pertinence and efficiency to provide a public good, consequently threatening the assurance of a universal human right. The dilemma, broadly speaking, is due to information gaps, the inability to reliably monitor the daily performance

2 PREAL (2000), "Nuevas formas de financiamiento de la educación", Serie "Mejores Prácticas, Formas y Reformas de la Educación", Santiago de Chile. Available from: http://www.preal.org/Archivos/Preal%20Publicaciones/Pol%C3%ADticas%20y%20Mejores%20Pr%C3%A1cticas/Serie%20Mejores%20Pr%C3%A1cticas/mejores4.pdf

3 Narodowsky, M.; Nores, M.; Andrada, M. (2002). "Nuevas tendencias en políticas educativas. alternativas para la escuela pública", in Narodowsky, M., Nores M. and Andrada M. (comps.), *Nuevas tendencias en políticas educativas: Estado, mercado y escuela*, Buenos Aires, Granica.

of these atomized actors and to the difficulty to impose penalties in case of poor performance.

Education decentralization policies may be interpreted, at least in part, as an attempt to respond to the challenge of quality and the principal-agent problem. Transferring responsibilities from national to sub national government levels has assumed a higher capacity of decentralized authorities to monitor the performance of school level actors, whether by better awareness of local contexts –their needs and social dynamics – an increased ability to survey and process information about the implementation of the school system in their administrative areas, the capacity to establish closer follow-up and monitoring mechanisms, etc. Decentralization policies may also be understood as an attempt to respond to the challenge of expanding coverage, by assuming that local stakeholders have a broader knowledge about the contexts where education supply should be expanded and, therefore, they are in a better position to make the most appropriate decisions as to where the investment should be directed. The empirical results of these policies have been and still are subject to an extensive discussion, yet far from universal conclusions[4].

Decentralization policies have often included *demand-oriented education funding programmes*, particularly from the late 1970s until the end of the century. This alternative has become known as the voucher policy, with reference to the documents delivered to the head of the family, which enabled them to enrol their children at accredited schools of their choice. These vouchers, in turn, are returned by schools for public funds. These education demand funding policies seek to protect the family right to choose the education service supplier and to control at least some aspects related to the quality of the service. They suppose that creating a demand is an incentive enough to cover a supply emergency, thus extending the scope of the education system. They also assume that, with the purpose of ensuring the economic solvency of the institution, management teams are faced with incentives to improve the efficiency of the school management and the quality of the education service, in order to attract and maintain the enrolment flow. In terms of the principal-agent problem, demand financing policies may be interpreted as the transfer

4 Winkler, D.; Gershberg, A. (2002), "Los efectos de la descentralización del sistema educacional sobre la calidad de la educación en América Latina", in Alvarez, B. (et al.), *Creando autonomía en las escuelas*, Santiago de Chile, PREAL / LOM.

of the regulatory competence to an education market, where families turn into principals, capable of monitoring the performance of school agents by observing the educational results of their children. Various studies on the implementation of this education provision modality have pinpointed the empirical shortfalls of this theoretical model and its perverse consequences on the evolution of education systems. This has discouraged, during the last years, the adoption of this method as a policy alternative[5].

Unsatisfactory results of demand-oriented financing programmes have contributed, in part, to increase the debate on the second funding alternative to the private sector. In supply-oriented financing programmes, the incentives confronted by school management teams to ensure a better resource management and education quality, are not provided by an "education market", but require a comprehensive State regulation. In this sense, supply financing policies run into the same challenges as direct State provision policies: how to ensure, both at a system and at a school level the adequate attention to the universal right of an education for all?

Public funding of private education might represent a better theoretical option to the direct provision of the service by the State to the extent that it enables the State to stop funding schools with poor performances. This theoretical advantage is connected to job stability of professional staff – teachers, principals, supervisors, etc.– in public school networks of most contemporary educational systems. Job stability, on its turn, is one of the pillars of bureaucratic autonomy. . Perhaps this might be one of the arguments underlying the expansion of supply-oriented funding programmes in the last ten years, as a political alternative, particularly in contexts pursuing extension of coverage.

Theoretically, however, the advantages of indirect supply-oriented provision are not clear with respect to the direct provision for the purpose of extending educational coverage. The argument that possibly explains the dissemination of these programmes during the last decades is the lower cost per student

5 Wolf, P.. (2011) "¿Promueven la justicia social los *vouchers* escolares? Case study in Washington, DC". PREAL *Serie Documentos* Nº 53, Programa de Promoción de la Reforma Educativa en América Latina y el Caribe (PREAL). Available from: http://www.preal.org/Archivos/Preal%20Publicaciones/PREAL%20Documentos/PREALDOC53.pdf

often associated with them. This is related to strictly empirical matters, such as the possibility to incorporate previously existing infrastructures to the public education services and more flexible and less expensive contract arrangements with teachers working under this modality.

To a great extent, these school grant programmes are being implemented in contexts where education decentralization is an ongoing process. Thus, the funding modality is combined with other aspects of decentralization policies, leading to configurations that may be interpreted as different ways to reposition the State as a guarantor of the universal right to a quality education.

This repositioning may be analysed by observing, on the one hand, the redistribution of responsibilities and roles of provision of the service, within the State institutional structure itself to the sub national and local levels, and, on the other hand, the assignment of responsibilities and roles associated to the provision of the service to civil society.

The four most paradigmatic cases of school grant programmes implemented in Latin America - EDUCO, in El Salvador; PRONADE, in Guatemala; Escuelas Autónomas (Autonomous Schools), in Nicaragua; and PROHECO, in Honduras- have been characterized by a combination of decentralization from the national education authority to sub national State agents and civil society. Therefore, they may be called *community-based school grant programmes*. The particular characteristic of these programmes is that the transfer of resources to the educational institutions is conditioned to the creation of community-based associations, where students' parents are made responsible for a wide range of responsibilities related to school management, such as hiring and paying teachers. Thus, they represent mixed cases of supply and demand funding, to the extent that the "community" emerges as a mediator of the education service provision. Based on this common characteristic, the specific decentralized roles and responsibilities towards sub national governments and civil society have been different in each case, as well as the general purposes of the programmes and assumptions they are based on[6].

6 For further information on these four Latin American experiences and other cases in the region, see Souto Simão, M.; Ratzman, N.; Pinkasz, D.; Clucellas, M., *School Grants in Latin America: a desk review of selected experiences*, Buenos Aires, IIPE-UNESCO (in press).

Some of these programmes have been oriented to avoid that low-income families pay for access to education, aiming at eliminating any kind of fee. Also, they have been used as a strategy to provide additional funding to disadvantaged schools, to vulnerable populations or to groups suffering some kind of discrimination. These programmes share the assumption that autonomy in the use of funds allows direct responsible parties providing education – the community in the four above mentioned cases –a better allocation of funds given their better understanding of local needs. Thus, it is assumed that greater responsibilities at the school level and increased community control contribute to the efficiency of the expenditure.

But the transfer of competences on school financial management to community actors is one of the various areas of the education management affected by decentralization processes. In fact, fund transfers are many times accompanied by the extension of school functions not specifically related to funds, such as decisions on recruitment and training of teachers or school organization and curriculum development. Therefore, a study such as this pretends to pay attention to the articulation and coordination of a wide range of school decisions that accompany –or are accompanied by– financial decisions.

The complementary purpose of many policies for the transfer of resources at a school level is to increase the autonomy of institutions under the above mentioned assumptions[7]. Therefore, this study defines "school autonomy" as the high or low degree of decision making power that school or community actors have on the provision of education services.

Once defined, "school autonomy" specifically refers to the scope of action that the institutional design and its implementation assign to the different levels that entail the governance of the education system. It is then necessary to identify the fields of the education activity, the purpose and the mobilization of resources by means of which autonomy is exercised. It also leads to ponder about how the autonomy exercised at a school level has a bearing on accomplishing the universal right to a quality education for all. This requires consideration of not only the relationship between the school and the community, but also the potentialities and tensions that the attention to diversity conveys to join-up the system and the educational policy.

7 See, for example, Arcia, G. and Belli, H. (2002), *La autonomía escolar en Nicaragua: restableciendo el contrato social. Creando autonomía en las escuelas*, Santiago de Chile, PREAL / LOM.

2. The Honduran Programme for Community-Based Education (PROHECO)

PROHECO is a programme oriented to provide Pre Basic and Basic education in remote rural areas of Honduras fostering the participation of communities in school management. It was created in 1998, after the devastation caused by hurricane Mitch, within the framework of the educational decentralization processes extended in various countries of the region during the 1990s. The Programme decentralizes the execution and control of funds aimed at paying teachers' salaries by transferring these resources to the communities. PROHECO schools are currently distributed in 18 departments of the country. They cover 9% and 15% of the national and rural enrolment at the Pre Basic level[8], respectively, and 8% and 13% of the national and rural enrolment at the Basic level[9].

Management Structure

PROHECO has a central management structure in the Ministry of Education, and a management structure in the territories in which the departments are the administrative units. The central management structure includes a General Coordination under the Undersecretariat of Pedagogical Technical Affairs, a Sub Coordination and six technical administrative units (Technical Pedagogical Unit, Planning and Evaluation Unit, Pre Intervention Unit, Human Resources, Legal Unit, Statistical Unit). The structure of each department consists of a department coordinator and teams of so-called 'promoters'. Department coordinators and promoters are responsible for supervising procedures when creating Community-Based Educational Associations (AECO), acting as representatives of the Ministry of Education before departmental and district authorities when requesting authorization to open an educational centre, supervising the operation of the AECO and advising

8 Prepared by the authors based on the System of Educational Statistics (Sistema de Estadística Educativa - SEE), 2012. The total includes the education supply of Community-Based Centres for Pre Basic Education (Centros Comunitarios de Educación Pre Básica - CCEPREB).

9 SACE, 2013.

their management staff, particularly as to the management of funds, as well as acting as a liaison between AECOs and central authorities of PROHECO.

PROHECO's operations in the territory

Implementing the Programme in the territory basically implies the opening of PROHECO's educational centres and the transfer of resources to the corresponding AECOs to afford teacher hiring expenses. Then, to implement the Programme in a community, an AECO composed by students' parents has to be organized with the authority to hire teachers and administer salary payment.

To create a PROHECO school, the community, supported by the promoter, needs to identify families with children with no access to the Pre Basic and Basic education, provide premises for teaching activities until the school is built and identify potential teachers. In other words, the Programme, supported by the team, bestows on the community the construction of the demand for education.

The procedure to open PROHECO schools is detailed in the Programme regulations. First step: the community should gather in a General Assembly to elect a board of the future AECO. Second step: elaborate a "needs assessment". This assessment is drawn up by filling-in a socio-educational form, conducting a school census and drawing a community map. These documents include a potential enrolment of a minimum of 25 students and need to certify that there is no other official educational centre at less than three kilometres away. With these documents the Programme staff – promoters and department coordinators – request the creation of a PROHECO Educational Centre to the Departmental or District Offices. These are the decentralized agencies within the Ministry of Education entitled to authorize the creation of educational institutions. Once the approval from these authorities is obtained, the Programme staff submits the documents to the central management level of the Programme.

The following step is to formalize the legal status of the AECO and to process the necessary documents so that it may receive funds from the State and

sign contracts for teaching professional services. This formality is done by signing an agreement between the AECO and the Ministry of Education. The agreement establishes the commitment of each party on the educational service to be valid for one year and may be renewed subject to the compliance of the obligations by AECO. The last step is hiring the teachers needed for the educational centre.

Procedures establish that teachers should be selected by AECO's assembly, after evaluating the candidates' background. Teachers selected are hired by the AECO and their contracts are valid for one year. At the beginning, hiring teachers with no professional training was accepted, in secondary education graduates were generally accepted. Since 2012, when the Fundamental Education Act was passed, all teachers hired should bear a qualified teacher professional degree and there is a deadline in force for non-graduate in-service teachers to get a professional degree. The AECO is responsible for the control of teachers' attendance and the assembly has the capacity to terminate existing contracts in case of noncompliance with contractual obligations.

Transfer and use of funds

AECOs receive transfers of funds ordered by the Ministry of Education. The funds transferred are specifically allocated for the payment of teacher salaries; they include benefits such as the payment of licenses, 13th and 14th salaries[10]. Until 2013 each AECO received a specific allocation aimed at everyday materials for teachers (450 lempiras per AECO in each transfer, in case of single-teacher schools; and 600 lempiras per multiple-teacher AECOs). However, this allocation was interrupted as of 2014 due to a lack of resources. The regulation establishes that grants are directly transferred by the Secretariat of Finance to AECO bank accounts. The chairperson and the treasurer of the AECO are the only ones formally authorized to use the resources of the banking account. Payments to teachers have to be made by checks to their order. AECOs, in turn, record these payments, keep the supporting documents and

10 The Thirteenth Salary in Honduras is paid as a year-end bonus in December, for an amount equivalent to the 100% of the average monthly salary to workers who have completed one year of continuous service with the same employer or for a proportional amount to the period in service. The Fourteenth Salary is calculated as the Thirteenth Salary and it is paid in June as a Social Compensation.

submit statements of account on a regular basis. Payment and accountability procedures are carried out under the supervision and advice of the promoter, who periodically visits schools and forward the documents to the departmental coordinator who will finally send it to the Programme.

Classification of PROHECO schools within the Honduran education system

PROHECO schools are considered community-based official and public schools. From the curriculum perspective, they fall within the general regulation policy of the Ministry for Pre Basic and Basic education. Policies referring to curriculum, teacher training, evaluation and distribution of course books and teaching materials (when the Ministry distributes these resources), involve, from the formal standpoint, both regular rural schools and those belonging to the Programme. PROHECO schools are also subject to evaluation policies implemented by the Ministry of Education and, as it was already said, teachers should meet the qualification criteria recently passed by the Fundamental Education Act.

As part of the official system, PROHECO educational centres are supervised by district authorities, i.e., schools are under the control of district directors. Thus, as far as the operation of the AECO and the use of transfers are concerned, school actors report to departmental promoters and coordinators of the Programme, while departmental and district offices are the competent bodies in all other issues related to the pedagogical activity. This double supervision chain presumes an ongoing contact between PROHECO's field team and local educational authorities.

3. Methodological Strategy

The general purpose of the research programme providing the framework for PROHECO's case study is to see the contribution to the improvement of education of direct financial resource transfers to schools in the form of "*grants*". "Grant", "direct transfer", "direct funding to schools" and similar expressions mean the regular monetary contribution made by government agencies – whether through national sources or financed by international loans – directly transferred to the educational unit or to an institution directly related to it (parents and teachers school associations, school councils, etc.). Grants thus defined, comply at least with three characteristics:

a) Target schools are the direct recipients of the grant;
b) They are made in legal tender and not in materials or services; and
c) Target schools have certain autonomy to use the funds.

Grant "Programmes" or "Projects", are regarded as the institutional and management structures responsible for regulating and operating the transfer of funds and for carrying out supplementary actions to comply with the Programme's objectives. Schools, in turn, have a certain degree of autonomy to use the funds transferred according to the established rules. PROHECO falls within this definition.

The main question that guides the case studies of PROHECO is: *What are the most important contributions of this school grants programme in terms of the contribution to equity and quality in education?* Concurrently, the aim is to establish the non-expected educational effects –desired or not – of the Programme, with a view to identify them and, eventually, control them to optimize the achieved results.

In this line, the study shall contribute to the following *specific objectives*:

- To characterise PROHECO's design and the changes in its development over time.
- To characterise the capacities necessary to implement PROHECO's school grant system at the different management levels and among the different stakeholders involved.
- To observe the main characteristics of the implementation process at a local level (school and community).

- To describe the exercise of school autonomy in the framework of PROHECO.
- To identify the main uses of grants at a local level.
- To distinguish the perceptions of actors on the running of the Programme.
- To assess the main impacts and results of grants in the framework of PROHECO.
- To identify the differential contributions of PROHECO's grant system in connection with similar schools and communities not participating in the Programme.

To that end, the methodological strategy distinguishes the following *dimensions of analysis*:

1. Programme design: seeks to describe how PROHECO was designed, highlighting the degree of integration of the Programme with the national agenda on education policy, the objectives and criteria to define the target population, how the Programme expects to deploy means and resources to attain its purposes, such as the scope of the coverage with respect to the potential universe of recipients.

2. Management Structure: seeks to characterize the institutional organization of the Programme to achieve its objectives, analysing the distribution of responsibilities and tasks among management units, their specialization, their degree of integration and horizontal and vertical coordination, as well as the description of human resources and available technical tools. Also considered at this stage is the institutionalization level understood as the degree to which the programme structure is incoporated into the whole ministry structure and its regulatory consolidation.

3. Programme structure and funding sources: seeks to characterize the Programme budgetary structure, aiming to identify the principal activities to achieve the goals proposed. It identifies the funding sources, implementation lines and their relative shares. Based on the lack of availability of documentary sources that may contribute to describe PROHECO's structure and budget implementation, results for this area are based almost exclusively on the interviews to educational authorities and the Programme team.

4. School and surrounding environment profiles: gathers the set of basic indicators that characterize each school, local management structures and the relevant features of the environment. What matters in the case of the school, as an organization, is the position structure, the staff professional profiles, their tenure in the activity and at the school and a description of the infrastructure. This area includes a description of the AECOs' performance, the organizations responsible for implementing PROHECO at a school level. This section analyses the organization, years in activity, stability as to their organization, management capacities.

5. Local implementation conditions: it focuses on how the programme reaches school and local levels and how is it received at school and local levels. The units under analysis are schools and AECOs. It includes the clarity and understanding of actors as to the scope and procedures of the Programme; the resources and devices available for stakeholders; their capacities and those the Programme seeks to develop; the way in which the Programme gathers and takes into account the local characteristics, opinions and assessment of stakeholders on the Programme. In this stage it is assumed that the dynamics of implementation at a local level cannot only be explained by the Programme design, but by other various intervening factors such as the structure of existing opportunities or which the Programme itself contributes to define, among others, the networks and the commitments among local stakeholders.

6. Use of funds at a school / local level: seeks to characterize the use of grants by schools and AECOs, within the context of the structure of the global budget for each school unit. It includes all funding sources, in addition to grants, and seeks to identify how these resources are used according to their origin. As to the Programme transfers, what matters is to identify the effective rules of execution of funds, the decision-making mechanisms used, the real use of grants, as well as the difficulties encountered during execution, if any.

7. Monitoring and control of the school budget: mechanisms to monitor and control the use of funds are characterized. "Monitoring" is defined as the actions addressed to timely detect the deficiencies in the implementation process to then make adjustments in management. In turn, the term "control" is focused on comparing the regulatory and administrative adjustment of the implementation of the grant. On the one hand, the focus is on AECOs

monitoring and control procedures within the school, and on the other hand, on the monitoring and control procedures implemented by actors outside AECOs and the school. It seeks to obtain a characterization of the mechanisms, an identification of participating stakeholders, the frequency and use of monitoring and control results as to the decisions made.

8. Programme results and impact: it focuses on the Programme results and impact on different sub-aspects. First of all: efficiency, quality and equity. For this sub aspect, the internal efficiency indicators available are used (enrolment rates, repetition, promotion and drop-out). Based on the available information, an assessment of quality is limited to the characteristics of education supply. An approach to equity is provided by an analysis of regional disparities. Second: it inquires into the school organization in a broad sense, including the institutional organization, the pedagogical organization, the teacher's work organization and the professional profiles. The purpose is to identify whether receiving and using the grant has an impact on the operation of the school as an educational organization. Finally, a sub aspect is included related to actors' perceptions about the results and effects of the Programme in the above mentioned sub aspects. The assumption is that the perceptions of actors about the achievements, impacts and general operation of the Programme and the grant system constitute a result in itself and, at the same time, they are part of a set of variables that contribute to explain how it works.

The research has been organized in three independent and complementary components, which read as a whole, allow for the construction of knowledge on the dimensions of analysis.

The first component was focused on the insertion of PROHECO in the general framework of Honduran educational policies, their institutional design and the management structures. It was based on the documentary analysis, the available statistical information and interviews to government officials and those responsible for management units of relevant areas at the Ministry of Education and PROHECO, including actors responsible for educational management at a department level. The development of this component was under the responsibility of the research team of IIEP-UNESCO Buenos Aires, in agreement with PROHECO's General Coordination.

The second component focused on the implementation of the Programme at local and school levels. A qualitative approach was adopted to survey and analyse the primary information produced from an intentional sample of 15 PROHECO schools distributed in three municipalities and other six rural public schools with similar educational services and in similar geographical location. These six rural schools were selected as control cases to identify possible differential effects of the Programme on schools and communities. The survey and preliminary analysis of the information related to this component fell under the responsibility of a research team of the Institute for Educational and Social Research and Evaluation (INIEES) of the National Pedagogical University of Honduras, specially called to this end, which conducted the research under the coordination of IIEP-UNESCO Buenos Aires team.

Finally, the third component took the profile of AECO members and their capacity for the autonomous exercise of their responsibilities as the object of analysis. The quantitative analysis was based on responses to a survey applied to the chairpersons (or failing this, to the treasurers) of AECOs based on an intentional sample of 41 municipalities distributed among four western departments in Honduras. The development of this component was under the responsibility of the research team of IIEP-UNESCO Buenos Aires with the participation of researchers selected by INIEES and the logistical support of PROHECO.

The study was based on both secondary information provided by the Ministry of Education, particularly PROHECO's Coordination, and primary information surveyed by the respective teams responsible for each component.

The secondary information sources used include general documents about the national education policy and PROHECO, administrative and accounting records of the Programme management and statistical information on schools and students. It was not possible to access PROHECO's budget implementation reports and part of the statistical information requested, as reported in the related items.

As to the *primary information*, the following *sources* had been consulted:

- Authorities or officials at the Ministry of Education.
- PROHECO's authorities.

- Staff in charge of operating areas at PROHECO (technical, financial and pedagogical, etc.).
- PROHECO's department coordinators.
- PROHECO's promoters.
- District directors.
- School principals.
- Teachers.
- AECO's chairpersons.
- AECO's treasurers.
- Students' parents.
- Remarks from field researchers.

The primary information based on these sources was obtained by means of interviews (components I and II), surveys (component III) and direct observation (component II). Table 1.1 reports the total number of interviews carried out in the framework of components I and II.

Table 1.1: Number and type of interviews made

Profile	Interview type	Total interviews
Component I		
National management level		
Undersecretariat of Pedagogical Technical Affairs	Semi-structured	1
General Director of Education Services		1
Coordinator of Supervision and Teacher Assistance Unit	Semi-structured	1
PROHECO's general coordinator	Semi-structured	1
PROHECO's technical teams	Group	1
Territory management level		
District / Municipal Directors	Group	1
Department Coordinators	Group	1
Component II		
Local – school level *PROHECO schools (15)*		
District directors	Semi-structured	3
Department Coordinators	Semi-structured	3
Promoters	Semi-structured	4
AECO's Chairperson	Semi-structured	15
AECO's Treasurer	Semi-structured	14
Teacher/s	Individual / Group	15
Parents	Group	15
Non-PROHECO schools (6)		
Principal / Teacher	Semi-structured	6
Parents	Group	6
TOTAL INTERVIEWS		**88**

The production of primary information for components II and III was based on intentional samples that sought to determine the various contexts in which PROHECO develops. Municipalities have been taken as the first level of the survey cut.

With a view to deal with sample heterogeneity requirements, municipalities were selected based on a typology developed by the research team, where two contextual variables interact, one exogenous and the other one endogenous to the Programme. In the first case, the Municipal Human Development Index was considered[11] as an indicator of the socio-economic development levels, considering that they are associated to education quality. On the other hand, PROHECO's teacher turnover was taken as an approximate indicator of the degree of institutionalization of the Programme in each territory, under the assumption that a higher institutionalization should be reflected in relatively stable professional bodies and with better conditions to ensure the achievement of proposed educational goals. Teacher stability was calculated for each municipality as the proportion of teachers staying at the same municipality from one year to the following (on the total number of PROHECO teachers in this municipality), in the periods 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013. This has been done based on the payroll of teachers hired by PROHECO since the beginning of the implementation, made available by the Programme Legal Unit.

Based on these variables, a cluster analysis was performed which allowed for classifying municipalities under four relatively homogenous groups, with the following characteristics:

- Group 1. Made up of municipalities with a higher HDI and higher teacher retention levels on average.
- Group 2. Made up of municipalities with low teacher retention levels on average and medium to high HDI.
- Group 3. Made up of municipalities with higher teacher retention levels on average and lower HDI figures.
- Group 4. Made up of municipalities with low teacher retention levels on average and lower HDI figures.

11 UNDP (2012). *2011, Honduras Human Development Report. Reducing inequality:* An Urgent Challenge. Honduras, p. 308. Available from http://www.hn.undp.org/content/dam/honduras/docs/publicaciones/INDH_2011_completo.pdf

All municipalities in Honduras where PROHECO schools are operating, were classified according to this typology. Table N° 1.2 reports average HDI figures and teacher retention figures in each of these groups.

Table N° 1.2. Average teacher retention rates, municipal HDI and number of municipalities per group

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Average retention rates	74,89	54,68	70,90	57,97
HDI 2009	689	635	608	553
Number of municipalities	78	65	100	28

Source: Prepared by IIEP-UNESCO based on information provided by the Programme Legal Unit and the 2011 Honduras Human Development Report, p. 308. http://www.hn.undp.org/content/dam/honduras/docs/publicaciones/INDH 2011 completo.pdf.

Chapters V and VI present the additional criteria for the selection and the specific characteristics of samples for components II and III, respectively.

The following diagram broadly presents the relationship between the areas under study, the research components and the information sources used.

PROHECO Case Study. Methodological Strategy (summary)

	Dimensions of analysis
Component I • National scope • Statistics and secondary administrative records available • Documentary Analysis • Interview to those responsible for central and intermediary levels	**Programme Design** **Financing**
Component II • Intentional sample: 3 municipalities, 15 PROHECO schools, 6 ordinary rural schools • Interview to school actors and staff, Intermediary and local levels • Direct Observation	**Management structure** **Use of funds at a school level** **Programme results and impact**
Component III • Intentional sample: 41 municipalities, 182 AECO chairpersons • Structured survey applied	**School and surrounding environment profiles** **Local implementation conditions** **Monitoring and control of the school budget**

II. PROHECO's education supply in the context of Rural Education in Honduras

The Honduran educational system covers around 2.1 million students[1], including children, adolescents and adults. The Fundamental Education Act, passed in 2012, recognizes three levels of formal and compulsory education: Pre Basic Education, Basic Education and Secondary Education. Pre Basic Education corresponds to learners between 4 (four) and 6 (six) years old. One year of schooling in Pre Basic Education is requested to enter Basic Education in areas where educational supply at this level is available. In 2012 this level accounted for slightly over 10% of the total enrolment, including kinder and Pre Basic Education community-based centres. Basic Education covers 9 (nine) years, ages between 6 (six) to 14 (fourteen) and is divided into three sequential and continuous cycles of three years each. Enrolment corresponding to cycles I and II concentrates almost 60% of the total education system. Cycle III responds to almost 20% of the total and it was not compulsory until 2012. Finally, the Secondary level covers three years, ages 15 (fifteen) to 17 (seventeen). This Level accounts for slightly over 10% of the total enrolment.

As it was explained in the introductory chapter, PROHECO is oriented to provide Pre Basic Education and that of cycles I and II of Basic Education, with emphasis on isolated rural areas. PROHECO schools are currently distributed in 18 departments of the country. They cover 9% and 15% of the national and rural enrolment at the Pre Basic level[2],

1 Source: Sistema de Estadística Educativa, 2012. Does not include Higher Education.

2 Prepared by the authors based on the Sistema de Estadística Educativa (SEE), 2012. Total includes CCEPREB's education supply.

respectively, and 8% and 13% of the national and rural enrolment at the Basic level[3].

This chapter seeks to characterize PROHECO's education supply, stressing the importance of PROHECO's enrolment share, the number of schools and teachers in rural areas in Honduras, the infrastructure conditions of PROHECO schools and some internal efficiency indicators. PROHECO's situation is compared with the education supply of other public rural schools providing formal education. Also, differences among Honduran departments are analysed aiming at complementing the considerations on equity in the national education system.

1. PROHECO's participation in education supply in rural areas

In 2013, PROHECO's enrolment totalled 126.084 students throughout the national territory. This meant a reduction of about 5% with respect to the enrolment reported in 2010. This contraction is recorded as of 2012 and it is even more noticeable in 2013. Although it is also observed in the total enrolment of the Honduran system, the fall is even more noticeable in PROHECO. This variation may be related to different factors, mainly: a) a demographic change with a reduction in birth rates leading to an absolute decline in child population; b) demographic changes related to the migration from rural areas to urban centres; c) a decrease in enrolment due to strictly educational factors; d) the change in the data collection and management systems, whereby the Educational Statistics System (SEE) was replaced by the Educational Management Information System (SACE) in 2013. Irrespective of the reason, this decline is observed in most departments. In 2013, 83% of PROHECO's enrolment attended Basic Education.

3 Source: Sistema de Administración de Centros Educativos (SACE), 2013.

1.1 Pre Basic Education

PROHECO's national enrolment in Pre Basic Education increased by 7%, between 2010 and 2011, but then decreased until reaching 20.963 students in 2013. This trend has not been homogeneous among departments (Table II.1).

To evaluate PROHECO's contribution to the Pre Basic Education supply, it is necessary to take into account a second alternative education method promoted by the Ministry of Education, the Community-Based Centres for Pre Basic Education (CCEPREB)[4]. Considering this modality[5], PROHECO served in 2012[6] 9% of students attending this educational level. Another 27% was served at CCEPREB, which shows the importance of this alternative in the attention to early childhood education.

Table II.1. Total Pre Basic Enrolment, PROHECO Pre Basic Enrolment and CCEPREB enrolment per period. Years 2010 - 2013

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total Pre Basic Enrolment	176.513	180.842	177.207	177.676
PROHECO Pre Basic Enrolment	21.161	22.793	22.029	20.963
CCEPREB enrolment	70.722	70.397	66.707	SD

Source: Prepared by IIEP-UNESCO based on SEE (2010-2012) and SACE (2013).

4 Community-Based Centres for Pre Basic Education (Centros Comunitarios de Educación Pre Básica - CCEPREB) are an alternative coverage method originated in 2004 with the support of various organizations, among which are foundations, private companies, Education for All, bilateral cooperation and municipal governments. They operate in different places: schools, churches, community centres or private homes. They are staffed by community volunteers receiving *ad hoc* training and a minimum payment. Centres apply a methodology developed in tutorial material in CD based on the *Play and Learn Programme [Programa Juego y Aprendo]*. This modality is approximately six times more economic than the regular rural school. See Project "Central American Integration through Educational Reform", CECC/SICA/TAIWAN, Component Significant Improvement of Educational Systems. Activity Systematization of relevant experiences and efforts on the improvement of educational systems in Central America and the Dominican Republic during 2001-2010, Final Report, Honduras, December 2010.

5 Included here is the enrolment appearing on delivered databases as TICKET TYPE: CCEPREB

6 Last year for which information is available.

The decrease in enrolment observed as from 2012 in Pre Basic Education in both PROHECO and CCEPREB is surprising, as well as its relative stability throughout the same period, since the universalization of educational service at this level has not yet been achieved[7]. Indeed, the expansion of Pre Basic Education is one of the current priorities of the Ministry of Education.

Considering that PROHECO's core objective is to extend the education service to isolated, hard-to-reach rural areas, its contribution should also be analysed regarding non-private education supply in rural areas[8]. As it may be seen from Table II.2, in 2012 PROHECO's enrolment in Pre Basic Education in these areas increases to almost 16%. CCEPREB's cover for another 39% and the remaining percentage corresponds to regular rural schools.

However, these participation rates vary considerably along the Honduran territory. PROHECO's contribution is particularly important in the Lempira, Intibucá and Atlántida departments, where it concentrates around 25% and 30% of Pre Basic rural enrolment.

It may be seen that, although PROHECO represents a significant proportion of the Pre Basic Education supply, particularly in rural areas, it is not the main supply modality at this level. CCEPREBs make a more important contribution at a national level. Also, PROHECO's importance varies considerably among departments.

7 Estimates from the Ministry of Education of Honduras report a net coverage rate in prep school of about 78,46% (SIEE, 2012). O*n line* request. February 2015. http://estadisticas.se.gob.hn/siee/indicadoresDeCoberturaCalidad.php.

8 The study was carried out considering the group of rural, non-private schools, excluding PROHECO's as a comparison group. For the purpose of this document, the terms comparison group, contrasting group or control group are used interchangeably to refer to this group. When reference is made to the "other rural schools", private schools are excluded.

Table II.2. Initial enrolment in rural areas by type of education supply by department. Pre Basic Education and CCEPREB. Year 2012

	PROHECO	CG	PROHECO % (a)	CCPEBREB	PROHECO % (b)
Atlántida	1.343	1.950	40,8	1.648	27,2
Choluteca	1.035	4.543	18,6	2.846	12,3
Colón	1.559	4.307	26,6	2.251	19,2
Comayagua	1.295	3.444	27,3	4.434	14,1
Copán	1.317	3.325	28,4	5.874	12,5
Cortés	1.990	9.056	18	4.016	13,2
El Paraíso	623	2.892	17,7	3.897	8,4
Francisco Morazán	1.226	4.245	22,4	3.935	13,0
Gracias a Dios	56	3.516	1,6	981	1,2
Intibucá	1.968	3.416	36,6	2.832	24,0
Islas de la Bahía	101	807	11,1	249	8,7
La Paz	904	1.689	34,9	2.288	18,5
Lempira	3.015	4.080	42,5	3.275	29,1
Ocotepeque	545	1.974	21,6	1.005	15,5
Olancho	1.492	3.449	30,2	3.857	17,0
Santa Bárbara	1.433	4.186	25,5	4.892	13,6
Valle	353	2.715	11,5	1.419	7,9
Yoro	1.774	4.232	29,5	5.116	16,0
Total	22.029	63.826	25,7	54.815	15,7

Source: Prepared by IIEP-UNESCO based on SEE and SACE. References: (a) Percentage representing PROHECO's enrolment; total enrolment only includes the comparison group. (b) Percentage representing PROHECO's enrolment; total enrolment includes the comparison group and CCEPREB enrolment in rural areas.

1.2. Basic Education

Total Basic Education enrolment in Honduras was 1.264.635 in 2013. This total is slightly lower than in previous years, when it was always around 1.300.000 students (Table II.3). PROHECO's 105.121[9] students represent 8% of the total enrolment.

Table II.3. Total initial enrolment and PROHECO's enrolment by periods by department. Basic Education. Years 2010 - 2013

Department	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	Total	PROHECO	Total	PROHECO	Total	PROHECO	Total	PROHECO
Atlántida	71.489	2.405	69.802	2.441	67.231	2.390	64.706	2.222
Choluteca	80.428	5.629	79.760	5.871	77.730	5.687	73.892	4.980
Colón	58.652	5.935	57.947	6.993	52.685	6.610	50.647	6.185
Comayagua	81.459	6.837	80.084	6.723	77.744	7.017	75.828	6.691
Copán	58.400	6.578	58.811	6.606	57.136	6.433	55.840	6.267
Cortés	240.309	13.641	236.837	14.066	233.963	13.709	226.813	11.791
El Paraíso	77.657	7.945	76.733	8.599	74.331	8.435	69.855	7.552
Fco. Morazán	204.069	6.277	199.039	6.493	190.721	6.382	187.064	5.638
Gracias a Dios	22.727	1.228	23.478	1.555	22.232	1.397	21.564	1.162
Intibucá	44.509	7.396	43.705	7.747	43.902	7.626	42.147	6.983
Islas de la Bahía	10.317	267	10.335	472	10.420	501	9.847	218
La Paz	35.106	4.856	34.831	5.011	34.594	5.103	33.312	4.599

9 According to information prepared based on SACE's basis. This data is different from the information obtained from the SEE, where PROHECO's total number of students in rural areas and Basic Education is 107.888.

Department	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	Total	PROHECO	Total	PROHECO	Total	PROHECO	Total	PROHECO
Lempira	59.531	9.996	60.267	10.347	59.866	10.401	56.498	9.589
Ocotepeque	22.353	3.677	21.429	3.498	20.860	3.540	20.076	3.354
Olancho	95.733	12.490	93.829	12.641	90.511	12.496	85.939	11.894
Santa Bárbara	73.200	4.834	72.920	4.958	71.059	5.218	69.225	4.751
Valle	29.784	1.341	28.965	1.209	28.523	1.299	27.314	1.222
Yoro	102.184	10.732	107.130	13.269	101.239	12.212	94.068	10.023
Total	**1.367.907**	**112.064**	**1.355.902**	**118.499**	**1.314.747**	**116.456**	**1.264.635**	**105.121**

Source: Prepared by IIEP-UNESCO based on SEE and SACE. Notes: (a) Percentage of PROHECO's enrolment; in the total enrolment only the comparison group is included. (b) Percentage representing PROHECO's enrolment; total enrolment includes the comparison group and CCEPREB enrolment in rural areas.

Similarly to what happens in the Pre Basic Education, it is also observed here an enrolment decrease over the last few years.

Considering only rural areas and schools providing non-private education, PROHECO's enrolment represents between 13% and 14%, in the 2010 to 2013 period.

Again, the Programme's contribution varies by department (Table II.4). In 2013, in Ocotepeque, PROHECO concentrates 24% of Basic Education enrolment in rural areas. Share rates slightly lower, but equally high, are observed in Intibucá, Lempira, Olancho and La Paz. In six departments, the programme contribution is under 10% of the rural area enrolment. The lowest share is found in Islas de la Bahía (3%), followed by Valle (6%) and Gracias a Dios and Atlántida (7%).

Table II.4. Relative contribution of PROHECO's enrolment in rural areas by department. Basic Education. Year 2013

	Relative contribution of PROHECO's enrolment		Relative contribution of PROHECO's enrolment
Islas de la Bahía	3,1	**Comayagua**	14,1
Valle	5,9	**El Paraíso**	14,5
Gracias a Dios	6,6	**Yoro**	14,8
Atlántida	6,8	**Colón**	16,2
Santa Bárbara	8,7	**Copán**	16,7
Choluteca	9,7	**La Paz**	18,2
Francisco Morazán	10,4	**Olancho**	18,6
Cortés	11,5		
Total	**13,6**		

Thus, although at a national level PROHECO's contribution to schooling at Basic Education is under 10%, in rural areas its significance acquires a greater relative importance, while having a heterogeneous impact in the different departments throughout the country.

2. PROHECO's education supply compared to regular rural schools

In 2013[10] there were 3.445 PROHECO schools[11] in Honduras. Most of them were located in rural areas and 1,5% in urban areas.

Sticking to the current situation of rural education, which are the characteristics of PROHECO schools compared with other rural schools at the Pre Basic and Basic Education levels? This section approaches this question by considering the technical relationship among enrolment, number of schools and teachers, the quality of schools' infrastructure and internal efficiency indicators, in all cases comparing PROHECO schools and regular, non-private rural schools (comparison group).

2.1. School size

A first simple approach to schools operating conditions is offered by the analysis of the ratios involving students, teachers and schools. Tables II.5 and II.6 respectively, present the information corresponding to the Pre Basic and Basic Education for PROHECO schools and regular rural schools. In the case of Pre Basic Education, CCEPREBs in rural areas are also analysed.

10 Based on SACE's information.

11 Schools coincide with the school code and may provide Pre Basic Education only, Basic Education only or both proposals. In this way, the number of total schools is not equivalent to the sum of schools in each level.

Table II.5. Enrolment, teachers, educational units and indicators selected by type of supply. Pre Basic Education. Year 2012

	PROHECO	CG	CCEPREB
Enrolment	22.029	63.826	54.815
Teachers	1.225	2.767	5.361
Educational units (EU)	1.158	2.365	5.361
Students per teacher	18	23	10
Students per EU	19	27	10
Teachers per EU	1,1	1,2	1,0

Source: Prepared by IIEP-UNESCO based on SEE.

In the national average, Pre Basic rural schools tend to be single-teacher schools, regardless of the type of education supply. Only Islas de Bahía records another trend (an average of two teachers per school). However, the table shows an important variation in the average size of schools with respect to the enrolment according to the kind of education supply and, consequently, the variation in the average number of students under a same teacher.

Pre Basic Education is particularly intensive as far as teacher labour force is concerned. The age of students and their different early development processes, require smaller classrooms aiming at ensuring an adequate attention to individual situations. In this sense, regular rural schools seem to be in a disadvantaged situation with respect to other modalities. At a national level, teachers at these schools train an average of 23 students, against 18 in the case of PROHECO schools. The average number of students per teacher in PROHECO is equivalent to the Latin American average[12], but in both methods the indicator exceeds the quality parameters of advanced industrialization countries, that recommend one teacher per group of 15 students.[13]. It must be

12 Regional Bureau of Education for Latin America (2013). *Situación educativa de América Latina y el Caribe: Hacia la educación de calidad para todos al 2015*. Santiago de Chile: OREALC/UNESCO.

13 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2006). *Background reports of the Programme Starting strong II: Early child education and care*. Available on line: http://www.oecd.org/newsroom/37425999.pdf.

said that, in the case of PROHECO, the minimum enrolment required to open Pre Basic Education classroom courses is 15 students. CCEPREBs stand out due to a better student-teacher relationship in the national average.

When breaking down the analysis by department, it is observed that, in all departments, teachers in regular rural schools work with a greater average number of students than in PROHECO schools. Departments with highest number of students per teacher are Cortés and Gracias a Dios in any of the modalities of education supply. Gracias a Dios stands out particularly, where apart from showing higher student-teacher ratios in any of the three levels, PROHECO's supply serves in average 56 students in single-teacher schools. Islas de la Bahía, on the other hand, shows an average number of student- per teacher lower than that established by PROHECO.

In the case of Basic Education, the comparison between PROHECO educational units and regular rural schools shows the largest average size of the latter, both as far as enrolment and teachers are concerned.

Table II.6. Enrolment, teachers, educational units and indicators selected by type of supply. Basic Education. Year 2012

	PROHECO	CG	PROHECO %
Enrolment	116.456	694.611	14,4
Teachers	4.838	24.037	16,8
Educational units (EU)	2.716	7.750	26,0
Students per teacher	24	29	NC
Students per EU	43	90	NC
Teachers per EU	1,8	3,1	NC

Source: Prepared by IIEP-UNESCO based on SEE.

While there are usually between one and two teachers at PROHECO schools, the average number at other rural schools is three. This data suggests that, both at PROHECO and regular rural schools, teachers are usually required to teach in multigrade classrooms. It could also be suggested that, in the case of PROHECO schools, every teacher has to deal with groups of students more heterogeneous than expected taking into account the grade attended by students. This may imply further requirements in terms of mastery of contents and pedagogical strategies. Only the Cortés and Islas de Bahía departments deviate from this situation observed in the national average. In these two cases, the average number of students per teacher is close to six students, which would indicate an education supply where each teacher is responsible for one grade. Furthermore, it is observed that, on average, PROHECO teachers train slightly smaller groups than those trained by ordinary rural school teachers: 24 and 29 students, respectively. Also, the smaller number of students per teacher could be a more favorable factor for the multigrade teaching task.

Thus, it is observed that both in Pre Basic and Basic Education, PROHECO schools are usually smaller than regular rural schools, which could represent better relative conditions for the educational work. The average smaller size of PROHECO schools is probably related to the focus of the Programme on isolated rural areas, where in general population is less concentrated. Also, in Pre Basic, CCEPREB appears as an education modality with a more adequate student-teacher ratio for this educational level.

2.2. Infrastructure

Pre Basic Education

A second factor that is usually associated to quality in education refers to school infrastructure. According to the Infrastructure Census conducted by the Ministry of Education in 2012, PROHECO has a global lower quality infrastructure than regular rural schools, but which is better than CCEPREB's. For Pre Basic Education, the global quality infrastructure index –100 indicating optimum conditions– is 46 against 56 of regular schools and 36 of CCEPREB's (Table II.7). The overall assessment shows important deficits in the different

modalities, drawing the attention to the precariousness in rural areas. The situation is even more unfavourable for PROHECO and CCEPREB, where schools display lower quality of basic housing services (access to electricity, black water drainage system, access to drinking water), worse hydro sanitary conditions (urinals, sinks and bathroom fixtures), worst infrastructure or school physical environment conditions (lighting, ventilation, general building condition, age, etc.), and lower furniture quality. In the last two items (infrastructure and furniture), CCEPREB situation is even more precarious than in PROHECO centres. As to the exposure to natural or social threats, the situation is similar for the different types of centres.

Table II.7. Infrastructure selected indices and quality index by type of education supply. Pre Basic Education. Year 2012

	PROHECO	CG	CCEPREB
Furniture[14]	62	69	49
Basic services[15]	41	55	42
Natural threats[16]	94	93	94
Social threats[17]	78	80	76
Hydro sanitary[18]	13	21	12
Infrastructure[19]	49	63	33
Quality index[20]	45,97	55,57	36

Source: Prepared by IIEP-UNESCO based on the 2012 Infrastructure Master Plan.

14 It measures the furniture coverage in educational centres. The highest coverage is 100%. It takes into account the relationship between the number of desks/blackboards and students.

15 It measures the basic service coverage: Access to electricity, black water drainage system, access to drinking water. 100% means the three services are covered.

16 It measures the vulnerability of the educational centre with respect to natural disasters and their frequency (flooding, hillside movements, winds and tremors). It measures the lack of propensity (100% means there is no propensity).

17 It measures the access to alcohol, cigarettes and illegal drugs in educational centres and whether or not there is consumption of these substances in the educational centre. It measures the lack of propensity (100% means there is no propensity).

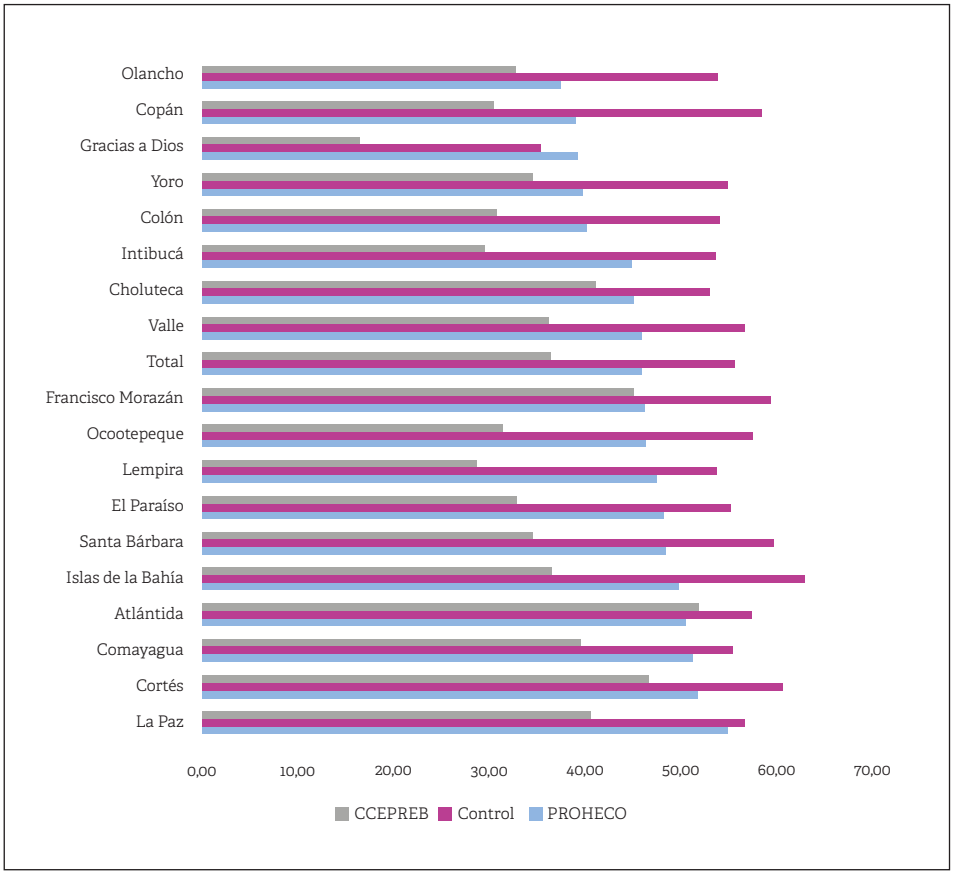
18 Hydro sanitary installations: it measures the condition and operation of urinals, sinks and bathroom fixtures at the educational centre (100%: everything is in good operation and condition).

19 It measures the condition of the school physical environment (lighting, ventilation, use, condition of walls, windows, roof covering, floor, doors, electrical installations, false ceiling, structure, building age, refurbishment and other aspects related to the physical environment infrastructure (100%: everything in good condition).

20 Infrastructure quality index: weighting of all the previous indicators.

These differences, found at a national level, still prevail in the departments, though they are more significant in some of them (Chart II.1). Departments where a higher deficit of hydro sanitary services at PROHECO schools is observed are Gracias a Dios, Olancho, Choluteca, Valle and Colón. With respect to the school physical environment or infrastructure, major difficulties are found in Gracias a Dios, Cortez and Yoro and, in connection with basic services, Gracias a Dios, El Paraíso and Comayagua.

Chart II.1. Infrastructure quality index at Pre Basic Education schools by type of supply. Year 2012



Source: Prepared by IIPE-UNESCO based on the 2012 Infrastructure Master Plan.
Note: Each educational center is assigned an indicator value expressed in percentages. Data for each department was calculated as the average of department's schools.

Hydro sanitary installations and furniture should meet the needs of students attending this educational level since they are qualitatively different from the requirements of students attending higher grades of Basic Education. Although secondary sources consulted do not provide information that allows analysing this aspect, as it is informed in chapter V in this document, most of schools visited in the field work of Component II do not have adequate installations for four and five year-old students.

Basic Education

As to Basic Education, the infrastructure information shows results similar to those of the Pre Basic Education. Regular rural schools have, on average, half of their needs covered, expressed in a quality index of 51 (Table II.8). PROHECO schools are in a more unfavourable situation, with an average quality index of 44. Broken down in several aspects, it may be seen that at a national level, PROHECO schools have more difficulties with respect to basic services, the school physical environment and hydro sanitary conditions.

Table II.8. Infrastructure selected indices and quality index by type of Basic Education supply. Year 2012

	PROHECO	CG
Furniture	62	61
Basic services	32	49
Natural threats	93	90
Social threats	80	80
Hydro sanitary	10	18
Infrastructure	48	58
Quality index	44,4	51,14

Source: Prepared by IIEP-UNESCO based on the 2012 Infrastructure Master Plan.

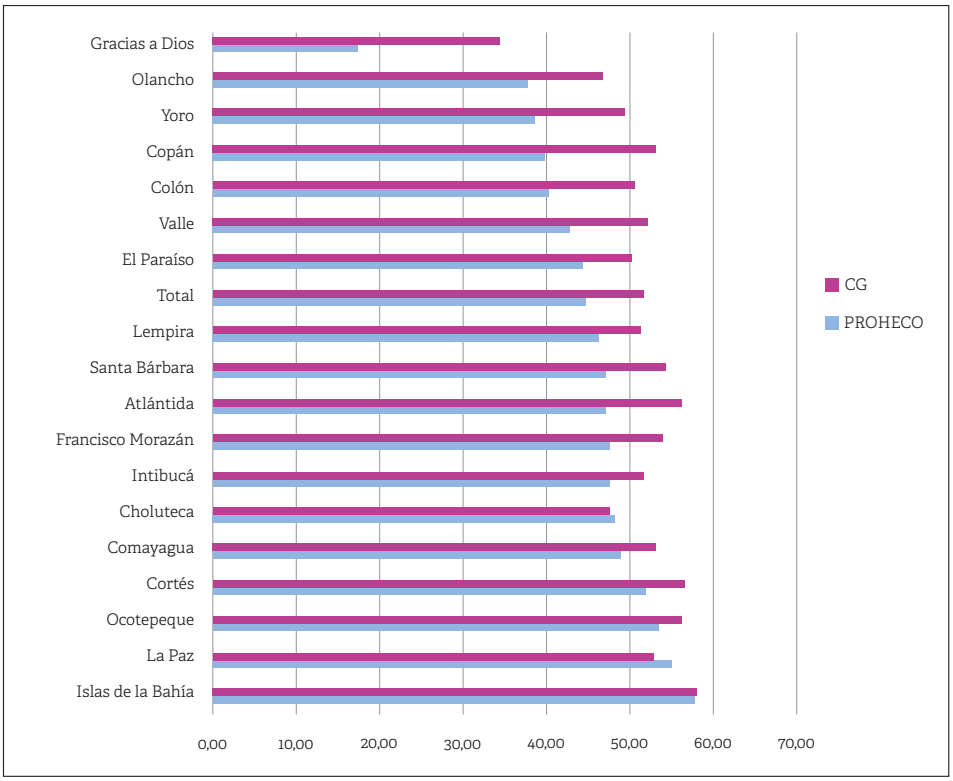
Values attained by indices on the condition and operation of hydro sanitary installations are striking, both in PROHECO schools and other rural schools; the situation of PROHECO educational centres is even more precarious: they are 8 percentage points (pp) below the average of the comparison group. In some departments, this difference is even higher, as in the cases of Islas de Bahía (20 pp), Santa Bárbara (13 pp), and Lempira (12 pp).

Another differentiating factor between PROHECO schools and other public rural schools is the coverage of basic services and the school's physical environment. With respect to the former, four departments show significant differences between PROHECO schools and those of the comparison group. These are Atlántida, Colón, Olancho and Santa Bárbara, with gaps of 24, 23, 21 and 20 percentage points, respectively. As to the infrastructure or school physical environment, major differences are found in Gracias a Dios and Copán.

In the national aggregate, furniture is one of the aspects that have a better coverage, without significant differences between PROHECO schools and those of the comparison group. However, it is important to emphasize that in this case, very remarkable differences are found at a department level. That is to say, while in some departments regular rural schools have better furniture conditions; in others this advantage is associated to PROHECO schools. This disparity in the behaviour could be related to the fact that furniture is one of the resources that the community or other actors may mobilize more easily and that centres differentiate according to this resource mobilization capacity. Departments where PROHECO furniture records a higher coverage are Choluteca, Comayagua, Intibucá, Islas de Bahía, La Paz, and Octopeque. In the case of Atlántida, Colón and Gracias a Dios departments the opposite situation is observed.

Finally, with respect to natural and social threats, indices are similar for both institutional types, apart from the fact that these situations are less troublesome.

Chart II.2. Infrastructure quality index at Basic Education schools by type of supply. Year 2012



Source: Prepared by IIEP-UNESCO based on the 2012 Infrastructure Master Plan.
Note: Each educational center is assigned an indicator value expressed in percentages.
Data for each department was calculated as the average of department's schools.

2.3. The internal efficiency

Internal efficiency analysis, based on the enrolment flow from a particular grade and calendar year to the next year, may be done based on the integrated analysis of three indicators: effective promotion[21], repetition rate[22] and inter annual dropout rate[23] by grade, in this case for 2012[24].

21 New students for year i+1 attending grade j+1 / Enrolment for year j attending grade i.
22 Repeaters for year j+1 attending grade i / Enrolment for year j attending grade i.
23 100- EPR – RR.
24 Calculation was made based on data for the 2012 and 2013 periods.

The analysis of these indicators shows a different trend in both types of supply. The effective promotion rate –which accounts for students who have enrolled in a certain grade during one calendar year and enrol in the next grade the following year– is, for all grades, systematically lower at PROHECO schools than at those of the comparison group (Table II.9). The reasons for these differences cannot be fully explained based on repetition, where the behaviour is similar in both types of education supply, but it may be explained based on dropout. This is case when PROHECO schools are more different from those in the comparison group. PROHECO students are usually less promoted and have lower probability of completing their studies than students attending regular rural schools. These differences are even lower in the Islas de Bahía, Francisco Morazán, Yoro and Gracias a Dios departments.

Table II.9. Effective promotion rate, repetition rate and inter annual dropout rate by type of education supply by grade. Year 2012

	Promotion		Repetition		Inter annual dropout	
	PROHECO	CG	PROHECO	CG	PROHECO	CG
1º	75,1	84,1	10,5	9,7	14,4	6,1
2º	80,2	88,5	5,7	6,1	14	5,4
3º	80,4	88,6	4,1	4,6	15,5	6,8
4º	81,4	89,1	2,6	3,3	16	7,6
5º	79,4	89,1	1,4	1,9	19,2	8,9

Source: Prepared by IIEP-UNESCO based on 2012 SEE and 2013 SACE.

PROHECO's effective promotion rate ranges between 75% and 81% and is always lower than that of schools in the comparison, which fluctuates between 84% and 89%. The smallest difference is observed in 4th grade (8 percentage points), and the biggest in 5th grade (10 percentage points), that is when the major gap between these two types of schools is observed.

Repetition has a quite similar behaviour in both types of supply. The highest rate is observed in the early grades –around 10%– and gradually falls up to the 6th grade, reaching 1% for PROHECO students and 2% for regular rural schools students. In 1st grade, repetition rate is slightly higher at PROHECO schools, but this situation is reversed in the remaining grades. However, the differences between the two modalities do not attain the percentage point in any of these cases.

The difference observed in both types of supply in the effective promotion rate is reflected in higher inter annual dropout levels at PROHECO schools, which show rates over 8 and 10 points higher than regular schools. Dropout in PROHECO ranges between 14% and 19%, while regular schools present a dropout between 8% and 10%. For both modalities, the highest dropout rate is recorded in 5th grade, and the lowest rate in 2nd grade.

To sum up, PROHECO school children are usually less promoted to the next grade level than those attending regular rural schools. Repetition is similar between both types of schools, reaching their maximum values in 1st grade, and gradually coming down in the following grades. The outstanding feature in PROHECO is that students are more likely to abandon their studies. This affects enrolment, which shows a successive fall from one grade to another. For example, in 2012, while there were 24.886 children enrolled in 1st grade, there were 14.845 enrolled in 6th grade. Then, part of the challenge to include all children in school has to do with retaining children living in areas where PROHECO already exists and not only adding new schools to the Programme.

III. PROHECO in the agenda and the structure of education governance

This chapter analyses the place of PROHECO in the national education policy, the degree of compliance of the Programme's objectives and its management structure. The analysis is based on interviews with educational authorities and the team responsible for the Programme's management at a central level. Secondary sources were also used, such as the Programme's administrative records and geo-referenced information to assess aspects on the institutionalization of the Programme and the geographical distribution of PROHECO schools.

1. PROHECO and the national educational policy agenda

According to the authorities surveyed, Honduras' education priorities are the extension of compulsory education at the Pre Basic level and the third cycle of Basic Education (7th, 8th and 9th grades) as provided in the Fundamental Education Act passed in 2012. These priorities are complemented by the curriculum homologation policy and permanent teacher training.

In connection with Pre Basic Education, authorities say that progressive expansion is envisaged, though no policies or programs are detailed in this sense. Progressive coverage targets are not established either. Community-Based Centres for Pre Basic Education (CCEPREB) are mentioned as an alternative service modality that would allow the expansion of education supply in a context of restriction of resources[1]. This reference may seem to respond

1 See note 4, Chapter II of this study for a brief description of Community-Based Centers for Pre Basic

to the expansion experience over the past few years[2] –in which PROHECO participated–, when the State relied on alternative methods of schooling managed by the civil society[3].

However, it has to be borne in mind that education statistics at this level show, as of 2012, a retraction of enrolment both in PROHECO and CCEPREB and the relative stagnation of the total enrolment. It follows that there is a slight reduction in the participation of these alternative modalities of schooling; further analysis could be carried out about the impact of these changes on the supply profile for the coverage of the population for this age bracket in specific areas, particularly in rural areas and, among these, the most isolated ones. The lack of census demographic data makes this analysis particularly difficult to conduct.

Current education supply for the Third cycle of Basic Education in areas served by PROHECO

With respect to extending compulsory Basic Education to the 7th, 8th and 9th grades, i.e., to the Third cycle, it should be noted that the current education supply is predominantly taught in former secondary schools, mainly located in highly populated areas. Therefore, this supply cannot reach isolated rural areas.

The cartographic analysis provides input for discussion about the need to expand PROHECO's education supply to the Third cycle. An argument favourable to this decision –assuming all other pedagogical and infrastructure issues have been taken care of– would be the lack of education supply for this level in the area of influence of PROHECO institutions[4]. On the contrary, if

Education (CCEPREB).

2 According to UNDP *Human Development Report* (2011), the Pre Basic Education coverage increase by slightly over 13% between 2002 and 2010 would be the result of the existence of unconventional education supply such as CCEPREB's. National Commission for the Development of Non-Formal Alternative Education (CONEANFO) (2013), National Policy of Non-Formal Alternative Education (PNEANF) (2013-2020) Version II. Available from the Web.

3 See CONEANFO, 2013.

4 *Area of influence* is understood as the area within three kilometres from the geographical location of each PROHECO's school.

this supply was proven to exist, it could be argued that, instead of extending PROHECOs education supply to the Third cycle, the existing regular supply should be reinforced.

Cartographic information available[5] shows that 37% of PROHECO's schools providing First and Second cycles are located at less than three kilometres from at least a regular public rural school supplying the Third cycle of Basic Education. The real value of this indicator may be between 32% and 45% considering the lack of geo-referenced schools[6].

Table III.1: PROHECO's education centres providing First and Second cycles of Basic Education according to an overlap or not with a Third cycle level provided by another centre within the area of influence. Basic Education. Circa 2013

Number of institutions	731
Geo-referenced universe	1972
Overlapping percentage	**37%**
Minim possible value	*32%*
Maximum possible value	*45%*

Source: Prepared by IIEP-UNESCO based on 2012 SEE, 2013 SACE, and digital cartography of the Master Plan.

Taking into account the extension of Basic Education compulsoriness, this would mean the need to strengthen the Third cycle education supply in areas currently covered by PROHECO, particularly by opening new schools or classrooms and, to a lesser extent, the need to adequate the existing supply.

5 The analysis was based on the geo-referenced cartography provided by the Master Plan team during IIPE's mission to Tegucigalpa in September 2014. The information assessed does not cover all of the education centres reported in the statistical information, since there are schools not yet included in the digital cartography. Ten per cent of the schools providing First and Second cycles and, 8% of institutions providing Third cycle are not geo-referenced.

6 Considering the lack of geo-referenced schools, both the value observed in the geo-referenced universe and the potential values are reported under two hypothesis about missing information: on the one hand, that in all the education centres not yet geo-referenced there was a school providing the Third cycle at a maximum of three kilometres from a PROHECO Basic Education centre; on the other hand, the opposite situation: that in any of the centres missing in the cartography there was a Third cycle school next to a PROHECO centre.

Furthermore, implementing the Third cycle also means the application of a Basic National Curriculum Design which brings about the need to homologate[7] curricula corresponding to the lower cycle of the pre-existing Secondary Education supply: the Common Cycle and the Technical Basic Cycle. Consequently, the curriculum policy and the curriculum homologation for the Third cycle are other main focus points of the national educational policy. Also, curriculum homologation is accompanied by the elaboration of curriculum application tools, terms used to describe curriculum standards, planning, tests for students and teacher performance assessment. The application of these tools, as curriculum regulation instruments, is mandatory to the whole Basic Education, including PROHECO schools. Added to this is the focus in permanent teacher training for Third cycle teachers, English teacher training –which will be added as a subject in the Basic National Curriculum– and the elaboration of school textbooks for the Third cycle.

Thus, current Basic Education priorities challenge PROHECO to modify its design to include the Third cycle. The Ministry of Education authorities are interested in getting to know PROHECO's potential for this task and the Programme's officers are concerned with finding alternatives in this sense. A pilot programme is currently under development to open the Third cycle in four PROHECO schools in the Departments of Comayagua[8] and Roatán. The authorities might evaluate to which extent this can be adapted to the new context.[9]

It may therefore seem that the Programme is aligned, at least at the beginning, with the national education policy and that it is presented as a potential alternative to face the challenges of the current agenda. However, when this study was prepared, both the authorities of the Ministry of Education and different members of PROHECO's team noticed a nominal stagnation of budgetary resources allocated to the Programme. This might have restricted the Programme's expansion, led to eliminate the funding for some activity lines and the reduction of staff.[10]

7 "Curricula homologation" refers to establishing common accreditation criteria for studies completed in different schools.

8 One of the schools included in the field work in municipality number 2 had 7th and 8th grades.

9 Action Plan for Indigenous and African Populations in Honduras (2013); *Nuevas formas de educación administrada por la comunidad en contextos comunitarios socialmente vulnerables en Honduras* (*Piloting New Forms of Community-Administered Education for Socially Vulnerable Communities in Honduras*). Donation for the Project by the Japanese Social Development Fund. Tegucigalpa, Republic of Honduras.

10 Ministry of Education authorities say that 2014 budget did not include the necessary resources to afford

2. Compliance of the Programme objectives

As it has been already said, PROHECO is defined as an alternative programme of the Ministry of Education to extend the coverage of Pre Basic and Basic Education to communities located in remote rural areas by establishing a community-based administrative model to improve efficiency and effectiveness when delivering education services.[11]

The information available is inadequate to determine the potential universe that should be covered by PROHECO[12]. As a general approach, it may be informed that, according to the out-of-school children report, carried out by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)[13], there are on average, between years 2010 and 2012[14], 47.658 school-age children[15] that should be attending the first two cycles of Basic Education in Honduras and are not. Since no information may be accessed about the territorial distribution of these children, it is not possible to establish to which extent they may be part of the potential target population of the Programme. However, on the hypothesis that at the time of an almost universal expansion, it is possible to find population niches excluded from the education system in the most remote areas, this could be the upper limit for the expansion of the Programme.

a salary increase for teachers that congressmen had passed by mid 2013 and that teaching staff had to be reduced to keep up with it. Also, a monthly entry of 600 lempiras was eliminated in 2014 that was sent to the AECO for materials. Also, in the course of the study, a Comptrolling Commission for PROHECO has been appointed by the Ministry of Education cabinet, arguing that the intention of the authorities was to review the situation. The work carried out by the Comptrolling Commission ended at the beginning of 2015 and coincided with the discussion of the outcome of the research. In May 2015, a policy dialogue round was held in Tegucigalpa facilitated by IIPE, which involved PROHECO's new national Coordination and different areas of the Ministry of Education, aiming at redesigning and strengthening the Programme.

11 PROHECO, *2010 – 2014 Transition Report*.

12 This involves estimating the school-age population living in areas meeting the characteristics specified in the design of PROHECO and comparing it with the population served by the education system, be it PROHECO or any other type of education supply, i.e., estimation of coverage rates. This was not possible due to the lack of updated census data. The last National Population and Household Census available data are from 2001.

13 UNESCO-UIS (2015). *Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All: Findings from the Global Initiative on Out-of-school Children*. Montreal, UNESCO, Institute for Statistics. Available from http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/oosci-global-report-spanish.aspx

14 On line Inquiry February 2012: http://www.uis.unesco.org/DataCentre/Pages/BrowseEducation.aspx

15 *Ibidem*. According to the Report there were 45.945 in 2010, 30.453 in 2011 and 66.576 in 2012. Since these estimations vary, the average of the three years was considered.

Considering this maximum limit of out-of-school children and comparing it with the current enrolment in the Programme, it may be said that PROHECO covers, in the two first cycles of Basic Education, at least 68% of the potential target universe. This percentage could be higher if part of the out-of-school population lives in non-remote rural territories. However, as it has already been said, this data cannot be confirmed from the information available.

Since coverage of Pre Basic Education is not universal yet, a similar assumption cannot be used to make an estimate. However, it is surprising that, in the context of a non-universalized education supply, enrolment has not substantially increased in the last four years for which information is available.

As to focusing the Programme on remote rural areas, assuming that these fall far behind in terms of development, evidence shows that the Programme implementation is sensitive to this objective. Analysing the distribution of schools among municipalities gathered by their Human Development Index (HDI), regardless of educational levels, results in the fact that PROHECO has a stronger presence among municipalities with a lower development level than regular rural schools. This difference remains stable in the period under study (Table III.2).

Table III.2. Number of schools per period per municipal HDI terciles. Years 2010 – 2013

		Period							
		2010		2011		2012		2013	
		PROHECO	CG	PROHECO	CG	PROHECO	CG	PROHECO	CG
TERCILES	Low	37,3	25,9	36,5	25,8	36,8	25,8	37,2	26,4
	Medium	29,5	29,6	29,5	29,7	29,5	29,6	28,5	29,4
	High	33,1	44,6	34,0	44,5	33,7	44,6	34,2	44,2
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Prepared by IIEP-UNESCO based on the "2011 Human Development Report, Honduras" p. 308. http://www.hn.undp.org/content/dam/honduras/docs/publicaciones/INDH_2011_completo.pdf

In relation to the distribution criteria, there are currently 52 PROHECO schools that do not meet the requirements of being located in a "remote rural area" – since they are located in urban areas. Several explanations arise from interviewees: first, these schools had been created in areas meeting the requirements established by the Programme; however, such regions/areas were later reached by urban expansion.. The second argument is that these areas are extremely poor lacking all types of education supply and that the Programme should take care of them, in spite of their urban condition. The assessment of these two hypothesis exceeds the scope of this study. Notwithstanding, if the existence of a PROHECO school is justified in areas with such characteristics, it would be advisable to adequate the Programme design by reviewing its prioritization criteria.

In connection with the autonomy of the community-based school management, it is clear from the interviews to PROHECO's officers and five department coordinators that the political power of local authorities plays a role when it is time to appoint teachers and elect AECO's authorities. Department coordinators themselves stated their positions as "political". Chapter V in this document will delve into this issue when presenting the field work outcomes in three municipalities.

Going back to the fulfilment of the Programme objectives with reference to the geographical coverage, the cartographic analysis sought to establish to which extent PROHECO's education supply serves areas beyond reach of the regular school network. Based on PROHECO's regulations in force, the opening of a school belonging to the Programme is conditioned to the lack of an alternative education supply within an "area of influence", defined as the area within three kilometres from the geographical location of each school. The analysis intended to identify the adequacy of the current PROHECO's schools network to this regulation, where full adequacy would be reflected by the non-overlapping of PROHECO's education supply with regular supply, i.e., the lack of an education supply alternative to PROHECO's within the area of influence of the Programme.

Data analysed show that, in Pre Basic Education, there are at least 492 PROHECO schools located at less than three kilometres from a regular school offering the same educational level (Table III.3). With respect to the

geo-referenced universe, they represent 72% of PROHECO schools providing Pre Basic Education. However, due to the high number of schools that are not yet geo-referenced[16], this ratio could vary between two extreme situations, according to two maximum assumptions: on the one hand, that there exists an overlap in all educational centres not yet geo-referenced; on the other hand, the other way round, that there is no overlap in any of the centres not yet included in the cartography. These two assumptions would imply an overlap of 83% and 43% between these modalities as the case may be. Since there is a broad gap, the most accurate data the Programme should consider is that there are at least 492 PROHECO schools in Pre Basic level overlapping the regular education supply. Also, it is observed that a similar number of PROHECO schools providing Pre Basic Education are close to a CCEPREB education centre within their area of influence.

Table III.3. PROHECO education centers by education level, according to their overlapping or not an alternative supply within their area of influence. Pre-Basic Education, CCEPREB and Basic. Year *circa* 2013

	Regular Pre-Basic	CCEPREB	1st and 2nd cycles
PROHECO schools near an alternative education supply within their area of influence	492	483	1782
Geo-referenced universe	688	688	1972
Overlapping percentage	**72%**	**70%**	**90%**
Minimum possible value	***43%***	***42%***	***79%***
Maximum possible value	***83%***	***82%***	***92%***

Source: Prepared by IIEP-UNESCO based on 2012 SEE, 2013 SACE, and Master Plan digital cartography.

16 In Pre-Basic Education, 40% of reported schools is not included in analysed cartography (Master Plan); and among CCEPREB 53% of the centres are not geo-referenced. In Basic Education, this ratio falls to a 10%. Taking into account the PROHECO supply only, the cartography includes 60% of PROHECO schools providing Pre-Basic Education and 87% of PROHECO schools providing First and Second cycles.

In Basic Education, on the basis of the analysed cartography, 90% of PROHECO schools providing First and Second cycles are located at less than three kilometres from a regular school providing a similar education level. This figure could vary between 79% and 92% in case complete cartographic information was available.

Thus, it is proved that most of PROHECO's Basic Education current supply does not correspond to the Programme's regulations. On the one hand, this calls for reevaluating the statement that PROHECO "reaches those areas not served by the regular system". Official statistics analysed reveal a quite an extensive overlap among education supply provided by PROHECO, the regular system and CCEPREB. On the other hand, this outcome leads to a reflection on the effectiveness of the current regulation as a tool to regulate education supply.

3. Management structure

3.1 The context of decentralization and community-based participation

It is important to briefly keep in mind several characteristics of education management in Honduras to grasp the context of PROHECO's management. The education system is decentralized in departmental authorities who are responsible for managing the application in their territory. Departments are subdivided into educational districts under the authority of district or municipal authorities. These authorities –who have administrative and pedagogical roles and their own budgetary structures– are responsible, among others, for the pedagogical supervision of schools and the submission to the department management of applications to create new education establishments –which are created by the Ministry of Education– and the appointment of teachers in ordinary schools. Concurrently, the recently passed Fundamental Education Act establishes a set of community-based structures including local institutional stakeholders organized in Education Councils (central, municipal, district, etc.). Furthermore, the Law authorizes education

centres to generate their own income that may be added to those funded by the Ministry of Economy for current expenditures, to comply with the purposes stated in the education project. These characteristics grant a central role to territorial authorities in the educational governance. In this sense, the Programme is in line with the education decentralization policy in force in Honduras and a pioneering experience of community-based participation in education. This is a very strong characteristic which is positively regarded by the authorities interviewed.

3.2 Institutionalization degree

PROHECO presents two characteristics in relation to its institutionalization level which are combined with each other. First, it is a highly institutionalized Programme coexisting with informal practices. Second, it has a high level of dependence on territorial structures, whether their own or of the Ministry of Education or of municipalities. This informal institutionality derives in the extension of the role of territorial authorities.

On the one hand, a high institutionalization degree is observed as far as the existence of regulations and action protocols are concerned, which govern different aspects of the institutional life of the Programme and the assignment of roles among the teams. There are clear procedures to open schools, to create AECOs and to account for the funds transferred. The central management structure shows a technical team with differentiated tasks. PROHECO's departmental management structure supervises schools and is the bridge between these and the central management team. To this respect it is important to point out that the departmental management structure has the power to control the application of rules to operate PROHECO's structure and handles information, some consequences of which are analysed in Chapter V of this document.

This institutionalized structure coexists with different levels of institutionalized informality[17]. Informal institutions are understood as those practices

17 Informal institutions have been detected as one of the characteristics of institutionalization in Latin America from O'Donnell, G. 1996, "Otra institucionalización" ("Another institutionalization"), *Revista Ágora*, Number 5, winter 1996, pages 5-28, Buenos Aires. For a recent discussion between formal and in-

responding to uncodified action rules that might conflict with codified rules since they respond to other logic of actions.

Several situations mentioned in the interviews make it possible to fully account for the extension of informal institutions. One of them is related to the decisions to open schools in the Programme. The formal definition of the requirements about the location of the schools may somewhat vary according to local negotiations, demands of the local political authorities or the community. Thus, it may be possible that, once a school is established, its removal cost is high, even if the original environmental conditions have changed.

Another institutionalized informal practice mentioned by different sources is called the "borrowed AECOs". This refers to AECOs acting as mediators to transfer resources to other AECOs that, for some reason, are not authorized to receive bank transfers. In these cases, the central structure of the Programme management creates parallel records: one sent to the area responsible for bank transfers in the central government, including only authorized AECOs; and a second record, including the funds that should be transferred to AECOs not authorized to receive deposits. This is a recurring and common practice both by PROHECO's management teams and school actors and it is not codified.

A third situation that may seem to be accepted as a general rule by most actors involved in the Programme –and, therefore, it may be said to be institutionalized– refers to turnover of department authorities and staff and even teachers following changes of administration in the Executive and Legislative branches. Several persons interviewed pinpoint 2010 as a year of turnover of government officials and teachers, following change of political authorities. At the time of the research, government officials were in office ever since.

With a view to analyse this representation, the trend of PROHECO's teacher retention rates has been studied. Teacher recruitment is annually renewed. Table III.4 presents the distribution of teacher retention rates in the period

formal institutionalism, see Leiras, M., *¿De qué hablamos cuando hablamos de instituciones informales*? ("What are we talking about when we refer to informal institutions?") Universidad de San Andrés, Department of Humanities, Buenos Aires, mimeo, s/f. Available from: http://www.udesa.edu.ar/files/Faculty-Leiras/Publicaciones/De%20qu%C3%A9%20hablamos%20cuando%20hablamos%20de%20instituciones%20informales.pdf (last accessed December 15 2014).

2009 to 2013. It shows a very high teacher turnover as of 2011. In 2010, in half of the municipalities, over 80% of PROHECO teachers had worked in the same municipality the previous year. One year later, in 2011, this ratio went down to 65%, and fluctuated ever since without ever recovering the previous level. Although this information is not enough to determine the causes for turnover, it must be said that it converges with the hypothesis presented by the actors interviewed.

Table III.4. Distribution of PROHECO teacher retention rates within the municipality per period according to selected percentiles

Percentiles	Retention rates			
	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
Minimum	0	0	0	0
10	50,6	38,5	40	25
20	64,7	50	55,9	41,7
25	66,7	53,3	60	50
30	71,4	55,6	63,2	52,6
40	77,8	60,2	70	60
50	81,8	64,7	73,5	66,7
60	85,7	69,6	78	73,6
70	90,9	74,6	83,3	79,2
75	94,3	77,8	85	80
80	100,0	81,3	87,5	85,2
90	100,0	96,6	100	95,4
Maximum	100	100	100	100

Source: IIEP-UNESCO based on information provided by PROHECO.

In different ways, these informal institutions have a bearing on the extent of the decision-making power of actors operating at a local level. In the case of deciding on the opening of schools, the flexibility applied to interpreting the regulation and the objectives of the Programme enables local stakeholders –governmental or community-based– to start the negotiation process with the central level. In turn, the intermediation of transfers paves the way to opportunistic behaviours by different stakeholders at a local level –chairpersons and treasurers of "borrowed" AECOs, promoters and departmental coordinators– that may take advantage of their position as intermediary agents in the transfer of resources. In turn, the increase of teacher retention rates might be an evidence of the political use of these positions, if not promoted from the same field team of the Programme.

Several departmental coordinators interviewed defined themselves as "politically" appointed officials. PROHECO's authorities regard the beginning of the year –as a moment of revision and decision on the renewal of contracts– a moment in which they cope with a lot of pressure by the political power (congressmen, in general) to renew or revoke their field staff. In several interviews it is admitted that these pressures have been partly accepted, though they then explain that, once appointed to the Programme, their continuity in the team would be conditioned to adequate professional performance. The description of several features of implementation operations described in Chapter V, confirms this characteristic. The focus here is on how PROHECO institutionalism is permeable to the dynamics of the political party system at multiple levels.

This influence might be interpreted to be compatible with the guidelines of the education decentralization process. Although the background of this process goes back to 1996[18], the role of the local level is reinforced by the recent Fundamental Act, the regulations which assign an important role to the local management –understood as fund raising for education– and to the participation of the civil society in management bodies. Authorities themselves mention the strengthening of decentralized resource management as the main focus of the current educational policy framework. In this sense,

18 Rápalo Castellanos, R. (2003), *Los procesos de descentralización educativa en América Latina y lineamientos de propuesta para la descentralización educativa en Honduras,* Tegucigalpa, PNUD, first edition.

it is imperative to recognize that delegation of functions does not appear to be made directly to the community, but it is mediated by the political representatives closest to that community. In this understanding, PROHECO's institutional framework is favourable to increase the autonomy in education management of both the local political power and the communities. Since the former usually have more resources, symbolic and organizational, than community stakeholders, this would apparently entail the strengthening of the relative position of the local political power with respect to both the Programme's national coordination and the communities.

This dynamics of subordinating education management to the evolution of the political context might encourage the improvement of education quality under the assumption of an effective democratic social control. However, the conditions necessary for this are rarely present in democracy consolidation processes, particularly in socio economic areas falling behind, where population generally has very low education levels and a limited access to information and to decision-making channels. In the case of PROHECO, there is a concern because this apparent dynamics is associated with very high teacher turnover rates and with permanent, precarious infrastructure conditions and a high dropout level. Thus, it is advisable to examine to which extent the decentralization promoted by PROHECO's institutionalism has a bearing on the capacity of the State to ensure education for all citizens.

3.3 Integration of PROHECO's management structures to the Ministry of Education

At a central level, an increasing integration of the Programme to the management dynamics of the Ministry of Education is noticed, which is summarized in a formula repeated by almost every stakeholder at the central level, district or municipal authorities and departmental coordinators: *"PROHECO is also the Ministry of Education"*. The boost to this process is apparently given, on the one hand, by a change in the structure of the organization chart of the Ministry. After the Vice Ministry of Interinstitutional Coordination was dissolved –which was in charge of community-based programmes– it was easier for PROHECO to integrate the Ministry of Education. On the other hand, it is also given by the Education Fundamental Act that stipulates "alternative"

programmes must be coordinated with the basic curriculum, the standards, and the teaching methodology of the whole system. Finally, the interruption of international funds to fund the Programme seems to have contributed to upgrading PROHECO, not as an "external programme", but as a programme of the Ministry itself and part of Honduras' education policy.

Other signs of institutional integration are found, for example, in the total inclusion of PROHECO to the permanent statistics system of the Ministry of Education and to the Annual Operational Plan (POA) the Programme has to draw up as any other State agency. However, these examples show how full integration is a challenge that calls to overcome a stage when the Programme behaved as a structure parallel to the Ministry of Education. Thus, PROHECO keeps on conducting its own statistical surveys and maintains different administrative and accounting record systems, apart from those already existing in the Ministry. This grants the team of the Programme more autonomy over other areas of the Ministry, thus allowing PROHECO to operate within its own culture and dynamics.

The development of an identity of its own, together with a culture and work methodology, apparently not shared with other areas of the Ministry of Education, could be attributed to the fact that the Programme has historically benefited from loan agreements with the World Bank. This may have possibly required the introduction of typical management procedures, different from the ones prevailing in the Ministry of Education. Also, it may be related to the existence of operation rules different from those of the regular system. For example, those ones ruling the relationship with teachers -since it has its own teacher recruitment system– with the communities and, even, among the members of the central and territorial management teams. This typical PROHECO identity seems to involve a different perception of the educational activity, characterized by a deep-rooted belief in community-based management and its relationship with the local level. In turn, it seems to be engaged in a stronger bureaucratic flexibility, with a clear influence of certain practices typical of entrepreneurial management.

In this way, the route to full integration which PROHECO is undergoing, is not free from conflicts. During this study, it has been particularly seen in the difficulty of the Programme's team to access the information handled by

other areas of the Ministry or rather higher ranked officials, even when dealing with issues related to the implementation routine. It must be said that it is a recurring situation in complex organizations and in institutional transformation contexts.

3.4 *Integration into the curricular policy and teacher training*

PROHECO's schools are integrated into the curricular policy. They adhere to the same national basic curriculum and are subject to the same process ruling the curricular application; these are the definition of standards and the application of curricular programming, a sequence to be evaluated by teachers in the classroom. These processes should be supervised by municipal authorities who must regularly gather the "notices" from PROHECO schools. These "notices" are reports that gather the enrolment evolution, classes delivered and the scope in applying the curricular programming.

An important issue is to setup –with the encouragement of the Education Fundamental Act– the requirement to hold a teaching professional degree for the admission and retention of PROHECO teachers. This requirement is another standardization factor of the Programme according to the national policy and has multiple consequences in the teacher recruitment policy. For example, the ways in which PROHECO teachers design their professional careers and the role of local educational authorities to control the admission to the teaching career.

Authorities report that PROHECO schools should participate in sample and census assessment of students stipulated by the Ministry of Education. However, as reported in Chapter V of this document, PROHECO schools seem to be less required to conduct these assessments than regular rural schools.

With respect to training, from the formal viewpoint, PROHECO teachers are the recipients of training, just as the teachers of regular schools. However, since this training does not have a universal scope and it is managed at a local level by district or municipal authorities, based on the sources surveyed there is not a clear pattern of PROHECO teachers' participation in these initiatives

throughout the national territory. Something similar seems to be the case with the free distribution of books to students.

Including or excluding PROHECO in activities under the responsibility of district or municipal authorities, such as supervision, teacher training or the distribution of school text books, does not seem to obey a pattern directly related to the Programme. It would apparently be mediated by other variables, such as the quality of the relationship between district education authorities and PROHECO field staff, apart from ideological attributes of local educational authorities. That is to say, since there are no national guidelines determining the inclusion of PROHECO in these initiatives fostered by the Ministry of Education but implemented by decentralized agencies, there is, in fact, a delegation of the decision on the effective incorporation of the Programme into these policy dimensions. The responsibility falls into district and municipal authorities, whose actions may be influenced by PROHECO field staff, teachers or the community itself, according to the local dynamics in place.

IV. Fund transfers to the AECOs

Originally, this chapter should describe the structure and sources of PROHECO's operation, including both the amounts transferred to AECOs and the investment made by the Ministry of Education in areas not under the direct jurisdiction of the school community. These are teacher training, purchase and distribution of school materials, infraestructure and maintenance. The plan was to compare the average investment of the Honduran State per student attending a PROHECO school with the students attending regular schools. To do so, it was necessary to have information on budget execution of the Ministry of Education in the last fiscal years. That information was not available. The information made available only considers the amounts transferred to AECOs. The following discussion describes the mechanism used for transfers, investment volumes, spending patterns and frequency. It also allows making hypothesis on the sufficiency and equity of the investment made.

The data analysed covers transfers 46 to 68[1], including all transfers made in years 2012 (48 to 52) and 2013 (53 to 62), and those of up to August 2014 (63 to 68)[2]. A worksheet prepared by PROHECO's Pre-Intervention Unit was used as a source of information based on the Programme's administrative records. The worksheet contained information about 65,802 transfers, of which 203 were dismissed for lack of identification number. The total amount transferred to PROHECO schools in that period amounts to approximately 1,350 million lempiras[3].

1 The transfers made to AECO are numbered by the Ministry of Education in sequential and ascending order.

2 The information on the effective transfer dates was not available for this analysis. Therefore, it is not possible to determine the consistency between the fiscal period covered by each transfer and its effective date.

3 Approximately USD 67 million.

1. The transfer method

Transfers are made by the Ministry of Finance, based on information provided by the Ministry of Education, directly to AECOs bank accounts. At the Ministry of Education, PROHECO is in charge of defining the amount to be transferred to each AECO. This is calculated, mainly, according to the number of teachers hired in a given year. This parameter allows calculating the amount to be transferred for salaries, including 13th and 14th salaries. This variable amount is added to a fixed amount per school to be spent in fungible materials. Finally, according to the specific situation of each school, amounts are added to cover the payment of leaves. Based on expense reports presented by the respective PROHECO department coordinators, positive or negative adjustments are introduced for accounting purposes.

Transfers are only made by means of the SIAFI system [Integrated system for financial management]. To register on SIAFI, the AECO's chairperson or treasurer has to come in-person only once to the Ministry of Finance in Tegucigalpa. To make sure that schools that are not registered at SIAFI or are banned for any reason are able to operate, a registered AECO can function as intermediary.. The transfer of such resources to the corresponding AECO is monitored by the PROHECO's territorial team, according to a worksheet prepared by the central team. Since AECOs' chairpersons and treasurers are authorized to spend the funds in the bank accounts by drawing checks, it is assumed that the chairperson or treasurer of the intermediary AECO will sign the checks to pay salaries to the teachers hired by an AECO not registered at SIAFI.

The information provided by PROHECO for this study does not allow identifying the AECOs working as intermediaries. The amounts transferred are reported stating the corresponding AECO, assuming that all of them are registered at SIAFI. However, it is possible to know the situation of each AECO in SIAFI at the time of each transfer. As it may be seen in Table IV.1, 15% of the 65,599 transfers analysed were for AECOs that were not registered. It is understood that the reception of resources included in those 9,871 transfers depended on the intermediation of a second AECO. Although PROHECO's team states that this kind of intermediation belongs to a temporary situation, the data show a higher frequency

of intermediation operations in the year 2014 (20% of the total) than in the previous years (2012: 15%; 2013: 12%)[4].

This analysis by department shows that this phenomenon does not have the same incidence in all the territory. The Valle department stands out as the only department having all its AECOs active at SIAFI during the whole period analysed. In the opposite end is Gracias a Dios, which in 2012 and 2014 had no AECO active in the system. That would be the clear indication that all transfers to the AECOs in this department had to be made with the intermediation of AECOs located in other departments, which could have led to more important difficulties for the effective reception of the resources by their final payees. A less dramatic but still worrying situation is noticed at Yoro and Olancho, where approximately a third of AECOs are not registered at SIAFI.

Table IV.1 Transfers to AECOs active at SIAFI. Frequency and percentage over total transfers by department 2012-2014

	2012		2013		2014*	
Atlántida	710	85%	1.098	86%	574	75%
Choluteca	812	96%	1.068	96%	624	91%
Colón	1.003	90%	1.772	96%	1.053	95%
Comayagua	1.159	92%	1.757	96%	1.044	94%
Copán	1.058	91%	1.863	96%	1.107	94%
Cortés	739	98%	1.193	97%	702	95%
El Paraíso	1.448	89%	2.162	90%	1.219	84%
Francisco Morazán	978	88%	1.589	95%	938	92%
Gracias a Dios	0	0%	32	49%	0	0%

4 The analysis of each AECO's status changes within this term cannot be analysed due to apparent inconsistencies in the fields used for individual identification of each AECO.

	2012		2013		2014*	
Intibucá	941	87%	1.456	88%	833	83%
Islas de la Bahía	35	85%	65	100%	34	94%
La Paz	778	94%	1.188	98%	720	98%
Lempira	1.535	87%	2.267	86%	1.217	77%
Ocotepeque	803	84%	1.242	85%	660	76%
Olancho	1.787	69%	2.725	74%	1.464	60%
Santa Bárbara	1.182	94%	1.578	89%	960	86%
Valle	190	100%	270	100%	162	100%
Yoro	1.103	67%	1.950	74%	881	55%
Total nacional	**16.261**	**85%**	**25.275**	**88%**	**14.192**	**80%**

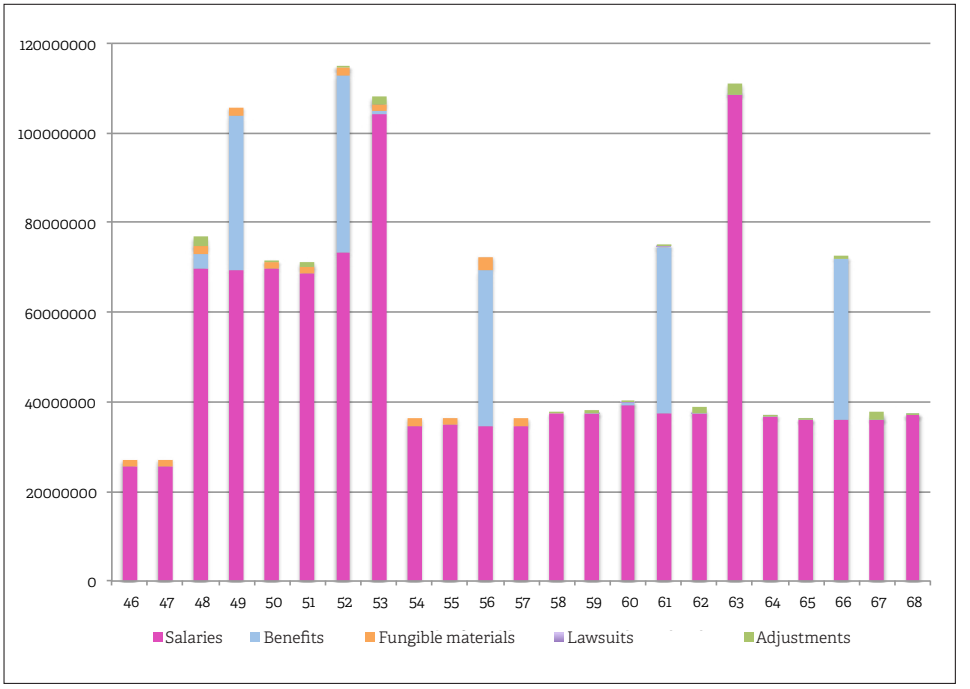
* Until month 8: August
Source: Prepared by the authors based on PROHECO's Transfer sheet.

2. Volume, composition and frequency of transfers

Eighty four per cent of those 1,350 million lempiras transferred to AECOs from 2012 to 2014 were aimed at paying teachers' salaries. The payment of benefits such as leaves, 13th and 14th salaries accounts for the remaining 14%. Transfers for the purchase of fungibles amount to 1% of the total transferred and they are exclusively concentrated in the years 2012 and 2013, no transfers being reported under this concept in the year 2014. Likewise, there are transfers for approximately 70,000 lempiras for the payment of lawsuits, all of them in the year 2013 and to the same AECO. Finally, there are transfers applied to adjustments, either positive or negative. According to the information provided by Programme technicians, they are estimated based on account statements presented by each AECO.

Chart IV.1 shows the prevalence of the item salaries in each of the transfers made. The strong variation among the amounts transferred is mainly explained by the period covered by the transfer. In 2012, except for the first two transfers, each of them corresponding to the payment of salaries for one month, the amounts transferred to schools included two salary payments for each teacher hired. From 2013, the transfers were made on a monthly basis, except for the first ones made each year (53 and 63) covering the salaries for the first three months of the year. The payment of the 13th and 14th salaries has a strong impact on the transfers made at the beginning and at the end of the second semester every year.

Chart IV.1. Transfers made by expense item. Lempiras. 2012 (46 to 51), 2013 (53 to 62), 2014* (63 to 68)

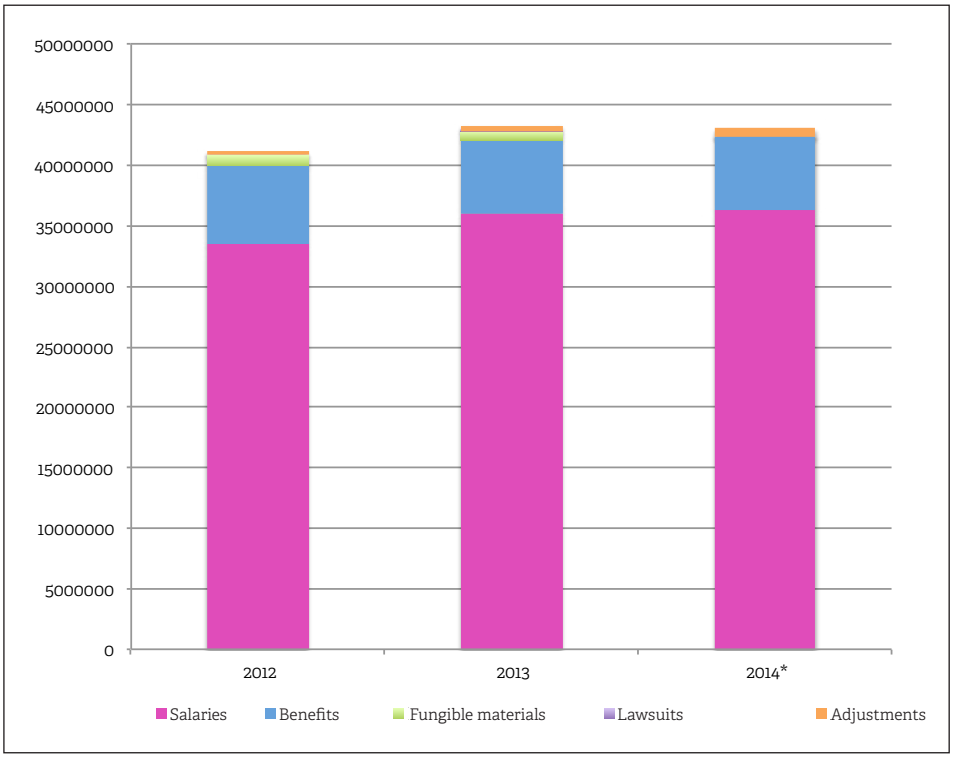


* Until month 8: August

Source: Prepared by the authors based on PROHECO's Transfer sheet.

Since data analysed does not include all of the transfers for the year 2014, it is necessary to estimate them when comparing the annual amounts transferred. To do so, the available data of the monthly averages of the transfers made for the payment of salaries and leaves for the year 2014 have been used to estimate four hypothetical transfers for the months of September to December 2014. Also, the amount reported as payment of the 14th salaries in transfer 66 has been doubled to estimate the payment of the 13th salary in the same year. This estimate allows calculating the average amounts transferred on a monthly basis in the years 2012, 2013 and 2014, shown in Chart IV.2.

Chart IV.2. Average monthly transfer, by expense item. Lempiras. 2012-2014



* Projection for periods 9 to 12 included.
Source: Prepared by the authors based on PROHECO's transfer sheet.

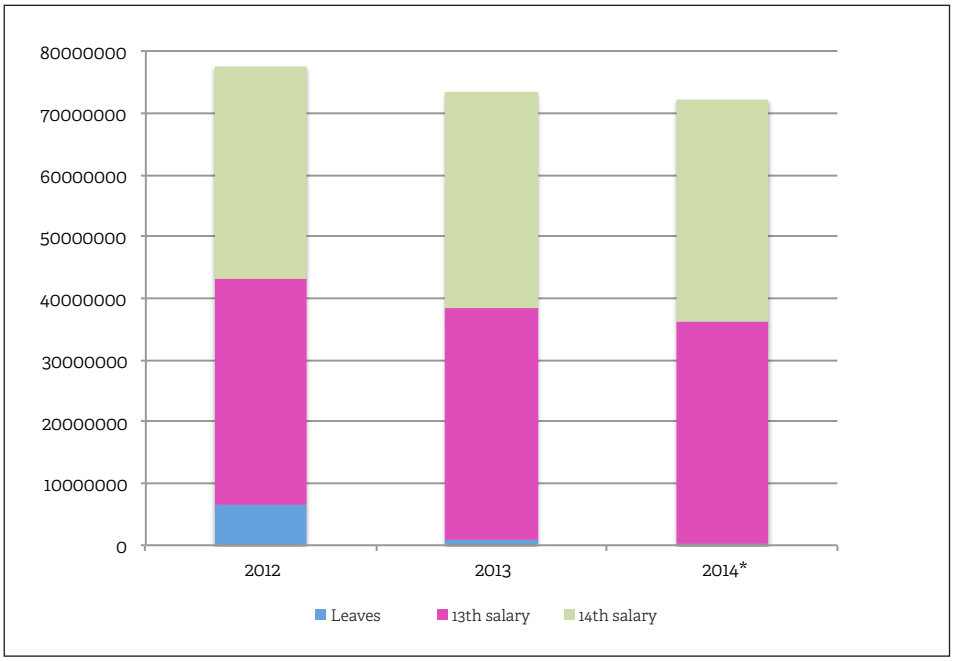
This chart shows a 5% increase in the total average amount transferred in the years 2012 and 2013 and a reduction of 1% in the year 2014. The reason for these differences is, on the one hand, an increase in the salaries of the teachers hired[5] and, on the other, the decrease in the number of teachers hired. The impact of this factor cannot be determined due to the quality of the information analysed[6]. Also, according to the estimates prepared on the basis of PROHECO's administrative reports, the number of teachers hired by the Programme would have decreased by 5% in 2013 compared with 2012, and by 6% in 2014, compared with the previous year. These estimates also show an annual decrease by 6% and 4%, respectively, in the number of AECOs in operation[7]. To a lesser extent, the variation of monthly average amounts for transfers between 2012 and 2014 shows a strong reduction of the amount transferred for leaves, which decreased from 6.5 million lempiras in 2012 to less than 1 million the following year (Chart IV.3).

5 In 2012, the basic salary amount was increased from 5,500 lempiras to 6,300 lempiras (approximately 275 and 315 USD, respectively), remaining steady ever since. Today it amounts to a take-home pay of 5,796 lempiras (approximately 290 USD) a month, after the legal deductions for the compulsory contributions to INPREMA and the workers union, amounts that are withheld by the Ministry of Education.

6 The Ministry of Education statistics system data made available for this study, include information about the number of teachers assigned to PROHECO only for 2012. In its turn, they differ from the data obtained by processing the transfer sheet provided by the Programme. These discrepancies may be due both to problems in data loading and differences in the process of information gathering.

7 Since data inconsistency do not allow for the individual identification of all AECOs, estimates prepared from the administrative records of the Programme would tend to overestimate the number of AECOs working and the number of teachers hired. However, the contrast between the different sources does not indicate a pattern. The total number of AECOs in operation obtained from the administrative records is 15% lower than the total reported in the education statistics system. In turn, the number of teachers hired according to the administrative records is 9% higher than the number of teachers reported in the SACE.

Chart IV.3. Transfers made for the payment of salary benefits (Leaves, 13th and 14th salaries). Lempiras. 2012-2014



* Projection of periods 9 to 12 included.
Source: Prepared by the authors based on PROHECO's Transfer Sheet

3. An approach to the analysis on the sufficiency and equity of transfers

The analysis of transfer distribution by departments where the AECOs are located reveals the higher participation share of departments Olancho, Cortés and Yoro, followed by Lempira and Intibucá. This distribution has been predominantly stable along the period, with only two significant changes: on the one hand, the increase of the participation share of the Atlántida department, after having received 4% of total transfers in 2012, it receives 8% in 2014. On the other, the participation of transfers to Olancho's AECOs decreased from 12% to 9% in the same period (Table IV.2).

Table IV.2. Transfers made by department. Lempiras. 2012-2014

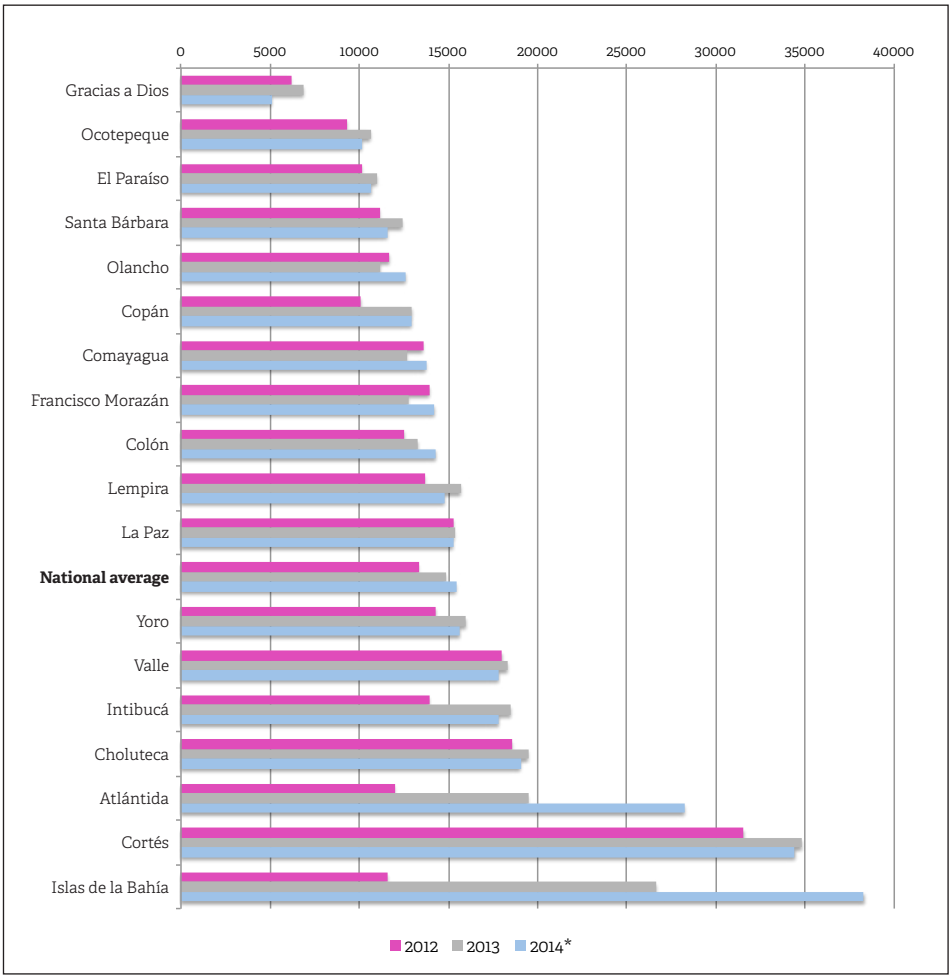
	2012		2013		2014*	
Islas de la Bahía	1.251.216	0%	2.558.436	0%	2.298.114	0%
Gracias a Dios	2.518.616	1%	2.647.134	1%	1.347.570	0%
Valle	6.050.848	1%	6.155.204	1%	5.775.084	1%
Ocotepeque	17.093.967	3%	18.254.304	4%	16.576.560	3%
La Paz	22.178.985	4%	22.820.132	4%	21.971.250	4%
Santa Bárbara	27.136.245	5%	25.030.596	5%	23.354.982	5%
Choluteca	24.709.800	5%	25.931.027	5%	25.354.224	5%
Francisco Morazán	28.578.621	6%	28.612.815	6%	28.854.756	6%
Copán	26.787.544	5%	32.380.516	6%	29.655.234	6%
El Paraíso	29.806.273	6%	30.895.834	6%	30.047.472	6%
Comayagua	30.277.842	6%	30.391.110	6%	30.175.908	6%
Colón	27.348.486	6%	33.207.416	6%	31.395.702	6%
Atlántida	19.113.212	4%	29.900.904	6%	43.009.848	8%
Intibucá	32.895.503	7%	35.754.209	7%	33.796.476	7%
Lempira	44.121.130	9%	48.590.160	9%	45.947.790	9%
Yoro	48.019.652	10%	50.858.208	10%	48.987.288	9%
Cortés	46.164.500	9%	51.374.448	10%	50.396.133	10%
Olancho	59.900.255	12%	43.894.664	8%	47.368.818	9%
Total	**493.952.695**	**100%**	**519.257.117**	**100%**	**516.313.209**	**100%**

* Projection of periods 9 to 12 included.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on PROHECO's transfer sheet.

The distribution of transfers in the area is directly related with the number of AECOs in operation in each department and the number of teachers hired. The comparative analysis of this area demands, therefore, to control the variations derived as a result of these two factors. To do so, the average value of monthly transfers to each AECO for each of the years of the series was calculated. Chart IV.4 shows the estimation made from the Programme's administrative records. It shows a significant and growing dispersion among the different departments. The average value of monthly transfers made to AECOs of the Gracias a Dios department in 2014 corresponds to a third of the national average value, in clear contrast with the departments of Islas de la Bahía and Cortés, the averages of which are over twice the country's average. The calculation prepared taking into account the number of AECOs reported by the education statistics system for the years available confirms the dispersion of the values assumed by this indicator in all the national territory. However, based on the discrepancies between these two sources of information, the relative position of each department is significantly altered.

Chart IV.4. Average monthly transfer for payment of salaries to an AECO, by department. Lempiras. 2012-2014

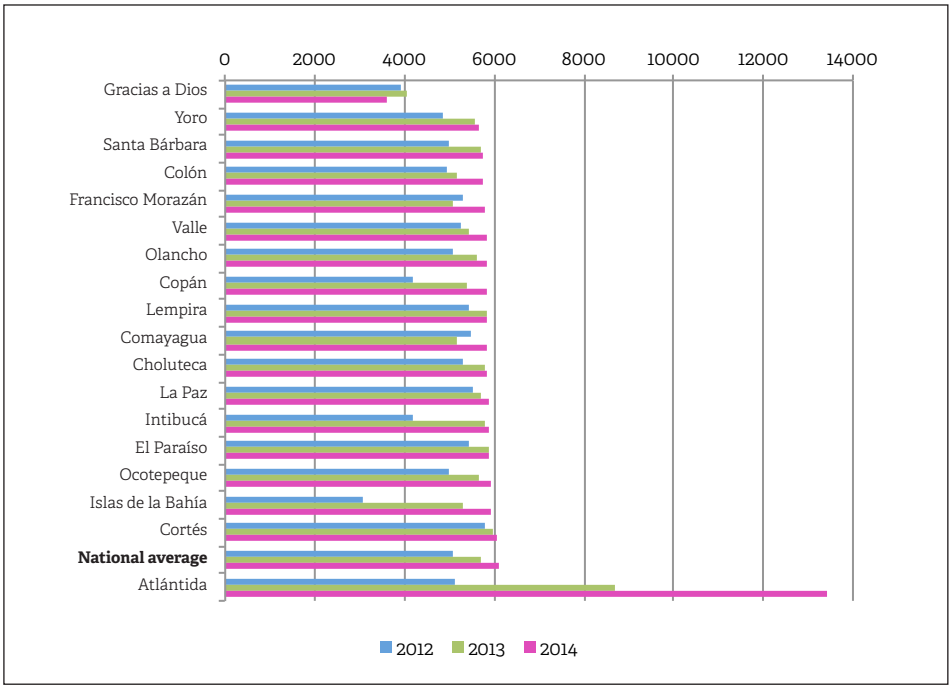


* Projection for periods 9 to 12 included.
Source: Prepared by the authors based on PROHECO's Transfer sheet.

The differences detected could be explained by differences in the average number of teachers assigned to each AECO, i.e., the average size of the schools in each department. To control the effect of this variable, a calculation has been made of the average amount transferred on a monthly basis to pay salaries to each teacher by department and per year. Theoretically, differences should not appear between departments in this indicator: The value obtained

should be equivalent to the average "take-home pay" of teachers per year. Values below this ideal measure indicate that the total transfers made for the payment of salaries are insufficient to cover the payment of in-service teacher salaries and vice versa. Chart IV.5 reports the results of the estimations made from the transfer sheet prepared by PROHECO's team.

Chart IV.5. Average monthly transfer for payment of salaries to an AECO by department. Lempiras. 2012-2014



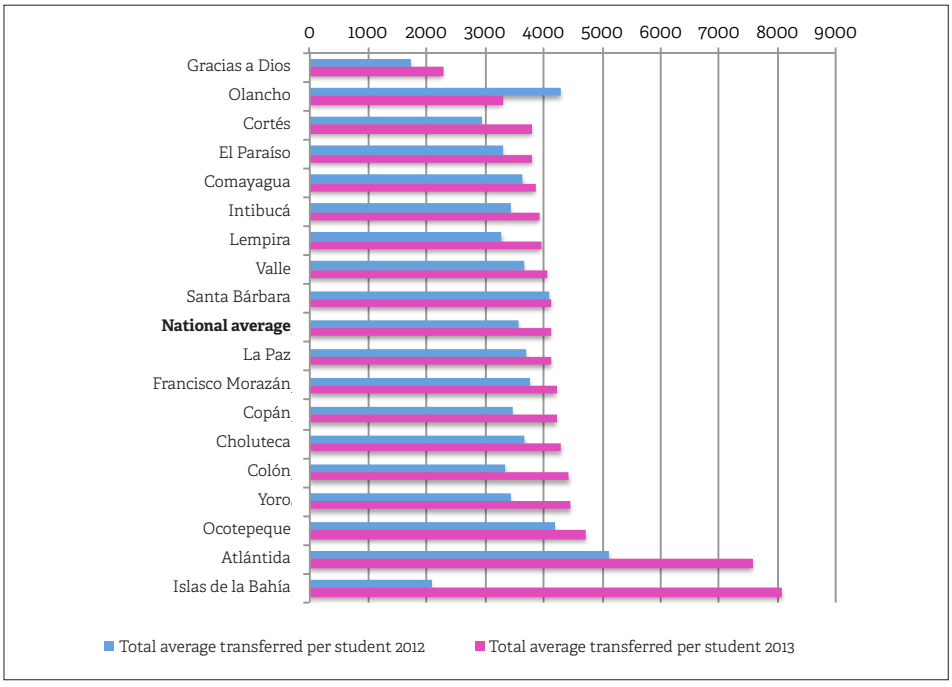
* Projection for periods 9 to 12 included.
Source: Prepared by the authors based on PROHECO's Transfer sheet.

This chart shows the unfavourable situation of AECOs located at the department of Gracias a Dios, where the monthly average of transfers for the payment of salaries does not exceed 70% of the take-home pay in any of the three years of the series. This could be indicating the existence of a high rate (approximately 30%) of school institutions which may have not received the pertinent transfers. The AECOs located in the Department of Atlántida are just in the opposite situation as the transfers they received reached a value. The indicator there

progressively diverts from the ideal value, until it reaches a value 130% higher than the take-home pay in 2014. This means, according to the administrative records of the Programme that the amounts transferred for the payment of salaries to AECOs in that department would be sufficient to pay a number of teachers 130% higher those in-service. The estimations made taking into account the number of teachers hired in the year 2012, as reported in the education statistics system, produce similar results, thus suggesting that the disparities found are not explained by the already mentioned deficiencies in the information analysed. The identification of factors explaining these differences, which is fundamental to analyse equity in education, needs additional research.

An analysis of the average transfer made per student enrolled per year, provides another look into the dimension of equity. Chart IV.6 reports the results obtained after cross-checking information between the transfer sheet and the enrolment data of the education statistics system.

Chart IV.6. Average yearly transfer by student, by department. Lempiras. 2012-2013



Source: Prepared by the authors based on PROHECO's and SACE's Transfer Sheet.

This chart shows again the differences among the different departments. The national average indicates a yearly average investment per student of 3,567 lempiras in 2012 and 4,118 lempiras in 2013. However, in the Gracias a Dios department this indicator is around half this value, while in the Atlántida department it reaches 5,120 and 7,564 lempiras in 2012 and 2013, respectively. In the department of Islas de la Bahía, the extreme value obtained for 2013 (8,071 lempiras) is due to a reduction in student enrolment of approximately 50% in those years, and could be understood as an inertial effect. But this factor does not account for the variations in the other cases, where variation of the indicator's values is mostly related to the increase or reduction of the total amounts transferred to AECOs. Additional information would be necessary especially in the cases of Gracias a Dios and Atlántida, where the information analysed does not allow confirming whether the amounts transferred are directly related to the number of teachers in-service.

V. PROHECO's implementation at schools

This chapter presents the main results of the field work conducted in Component II, the main characteristics of which have been described in the introductory chapter. This component was essentially based on qualitative information produced from semi-structured interviews to education actors, and direct observation of an intentional sampling of 21 schools, 15 PROHECO schools and 6 rural public schools. This field work was carried out in three municipalities which are representative of groups 2, 3 and 4 of the typology presented in the introductory chapter, according to their accessibility. No municipality of Group 1 was included because they were considered less relevant to the purpose of the research. The municipalities selected are located in the departments of Comayagua, Choluteca and Olancho. To protect the confidentiality of sources, the names of the municipalities have been eliminated and replaced by the number of the group to which they belong.

Seven schools were selected in each municipality, 5 PROHECO schools and 2 regular rural public schools. PROHECO schools were selected taking into account four types of centres:

- Pre-basic education centres only (1 centre).
- Single-teacher basic education centres (1 centre).
- Multiple-teacher basic education centres (1 centre).
- Pre-basic and Basic level education centres (2 centres).

For each centre type, the school with the highest enrolment number was chosen. At each PROHECO school, individual interviews were carried out to teachers, AECO's chairperson, and to groups of mothers and fathers of students.

Rural schools taken as a contrast group were selected according to the geographic proximity criterion to control possible effects of the environment. In non-PROHECO schools only teachers and student parents were interviewed. Besides, interviews at each municipality have been conducted with the authority of the Municipal Council for Educational Development, the District Education Authority, PROHECO's Departmental Coordinator and the promoter.

The field work has been performed by the Instituto de Investigación y Evaluación Educativa y Social (Institute of Educational and Social Research and Evaluation, INIEES) of the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional [National Pedagogy University] Francisco Morazán with the logistics support of PROHECO and under the supervision of IIEP-UNESCO Buenos Aires and using instruments prepared by the latter. Then, INIEES and IIEP teams worked in parallel to process and analyse the information collected, comparing the results obtained at the end. This chapter has been prepared by IIEP-UNESCO Buenos Aires and gathers up the contributions resulting from this exchange.

Table V.1. Classification of municipalities selected according to their degree of institutionalization and HDI

		(INSTITUCIONALIZATION) Teacher retention	
		HIGH	LOW
HDI	HIGH	Not selected	Municipality 2
	LOW	Municipality 03	Municipality 4

The chapter seeks to account for the implementation and operation of PROHECO in the territory. It is organized in nine sections, covering the characteristics of the communities where the field work was performed, the characteristics of PROHECO's local administration, the school profile, how the community associations managed resources, aspects of the curriculum policy, teacher training and evaluation policies, parents' opinions and the comparison between PROHECO schools and surrounding rural schools.

1. Characterization of the communities

The selection of municipalities was made applying a combination of two indicators. The average annual rate of teachers' permanence for the period 2010-2013, that would indicate the degree of institutionalization of the municipal programme (a higher stability results in a higher degree of institutionalization) and the Municipal human development index. By combining both variables, by means of cluster analysis technique, four groups of municipalities were formed and those representing groups 2, 3 and 4 were selected on account of their accessibility.

Here follows a summary containing the characteristics of the municipalities where selected schools are located. As it may be seen, the main differences among them have to do with the size of the municipality and, essentially, the educational characteristics of their population.

Table V.2. Total population and components of the Human Development Index by municipality

Demographic data			
	Municipality 2	**Municipality 3**	**Municipality 4**
Population	17.906	26.960	8.992
Components of the Human Development Index			
	Municipality 2	**Municipality 3**	**Municipality 4**
Life expectancy at birth (years) (1)	71,66	70,9	71,47
Adult literacy rate (% of population aged 15 years and older) (2)	79,72	71,53	61,29
Adult literacy rate (% of population aged 7 years and older) (2)	37,63	37,93	23,14
Estimated annual per capita income (USD PPP) (2)	1739,95	1921,44	1880,33
Health index (a)	0,778	0,765	0,775

Health index (a)	0,657	0,603	0,486
Income index (a)	0,477	0,493	0,49

Source: Prepared by IIEP – UNESCO based on INE [National Institute of Statistics] and information taken from the "Informe de Desarrollo Humano, Honduras 2011" [Human Development Report], Honduras. http://www.hn.undp.org/content/dam/honduras/docs/publicaciones/INDH_2011_completo.pdf

Notes:

1) Estimations prepared by the authors based on the Life Tables projected by the INE [National Institute of Statistics] for the period 2001-2015 adjusted to the national values projected according to the UNDESA [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs] (2009)

2) Estimations prepared by the authors based on the INE [National Institute of Statistics], the data base of the General Household Survey for Multiple Purposes (EPHPM, acronym in Spanish) for May 2009 and the data base of the Population Census 2001.

(a) See details of calculation in the Technical Note 1 of the Methodology Exhibits, "Human Development Report 2011", pages 270-273.

In each municipality, five PROHECO schools were chosen, as well as two regular rural schools, which served as a contrast group. The comparison of enrolment in the different institutions, according to education level, provides a rough estimate of the contribution of each type of education to the official municipal education supply. Thus, it is demonstrated that in Pre-Basic Education, PROHECO's contribution to education supply –measured as enrolment– is higher in municipalities 2 and 4 than that of regular rural schools as well as that of Pre-basic Education Community Centres (CCEPREB). Likewise, in Basic Education PROHECO's contribution is similar to that of regular rural schools only in municipality 4. In the other municipalities, PROHECO's enrolment amounts to 15 and 20% of the official education supply. These data partially converge with the national trend analysed above, which indicates a higher relative importance of PROHECO in areas with lower development levels, although the case of Pre-Basic Education in municipality 2 and that of Basic Education in municipality 3 report situations deviant of this national pattern.

Table V.3. Pre-Basic Education and Basic Education. Initial enrolment by institution type and selected municipalities (2012)

Municipality	Initial Pre-Basic Enrolment			Basic Initial Enrolment	
	PROHECO	CG	CCEPREB	PROHECO	CG
Municipality 3	128	496	362	768	4.158
Municipality 2	232	161	165	526	2.239
Municipality 4	91	29	40	636	653

Source: Prepared by IIEP-UNESCO based on SACE.

2. Main characteristics of local PROHECO's administration in the selected municipalities

Local management of PROHECO schools is the responsibility of a department coordinator and of promoters, who are called field staff.

At the same time, some aspects related to the Programme's schools operation are supervised by education District offices as part of their responsibility in regulating the whole local education service. There is a third actor, the mayors, i.e., the political elective authority of the municipality. Finally, there is the Municipal Education Commission (COMDE, acronym in Spanish), a recently created entity, responsible for gathering the community leaders of the municipality to detect and support local education needs. Although they have different powers, especially the first three ones, these actors have some roles in the regulation of PROHECO schools and AECOs activities. Following is an analysis of the formal and informal distribution of tasks among them to understand AECOs' exercise of autonomy.

The qualitative survey conducted in the three municipalities makes it possible to have an approach to the way in which PROHECO's field staff carries out their formal tasks. This survey allows stating that field staff tasks are developed, as a general rule, within the framework defined by their roles but, at

the same time, provides evidence of certain details and particularities in the exercise of their duties. These are about two aspects. On the one hand, the role played by departmental promoters and coordinators in the "local teaching market" and the appointment of AECO's authorities; And, on the other hand, the extension of their powers with reference to the payment of teachers' salaries.

As representatives of PROHECO, field staff has, along with other functions, the role of observing the formalities of the procedures for the appointment of teachers and AECO's managers. Decisions on these matters must be made by each AECO's Assembly, ensuring this entity's sovereignty and autonomy over the management of financial resources. However, the testimonies collected in municipalities 2 and 4 show the active role of mayors in presenting teachers to be hired by the community assembly, whose role would thus be limited to approve of the names of the teachers proposed by the mayor's offices. At the same time, they suggest that promoters do not react to the possibility that mayors impose their preferences to the communities in regards to the appointements and removals of teachers and AECO's authorities. Moreover, in two communities, it is said as well, that there is an agreement between mayors and promoters to decide teacher appointments. Something similar, although less frequently reported, is apparently happening with reference to the school boards. Then, in the same municipalities mentioned, the promoters seem to intervene beyond their powers in the management of resources and in the payment of salaries. As an extreme case, it is worth mentioning that in two communities of municipality 2, teachers report that they give part of their salaries to AECO's president and treasurer. These situations are compatible with lower institutionalization levels, or as stated in chapter III, is typical of institutions more permeable to local political parties' practices. The findings are, therefore, consistent with the criterion applied to select the sample.

As far as local authorities are concerned, there is a clear division of tasks between PROHECO's field staff and district offices. This division is related to the formal specifications (see chapter II in this document) according to the testimonies of the interviewed actors. Most schools recognize the district office as an instance to define the curriculum, or for pedagogic supervision, distribution of books and training activities. In spite of this recognition, district

office officials are not reported to visit schools regularly; interviewees say that books are very rarely and scarcely distributed, and training events are sporadic. Moreover, according to the testimonies, no substantial differences have been found, comparing the acts of the district offices, among the municipalities visited. The fact that these schools are localed in hard-to-reach areas might represent a possible explanation as to why there is minor presence of district officials.

In turn, district offices have some incidence in the process to select teachers. Since directors are formally responsible for checking the diplomas of district teachers, in some communities the district authority is mentioned as the responsible for receiving the petitions of teachers for positions and to communicate AECOs about the existence of candidates and their backgrounds. However, this would be different than the above mentioned events including the mayors' offices. This situation would apparently not condition AECO's decisions about hiring teachers.

As already indicated, the presence of mayors' offices in the life of PROHECO schools has been detected by field work. The descriptions contained herein about their role are limited to indirect information. Interviews suggest that there are two areas of influence of the mayors' offices on schools and AECOs. First, they play a role in the consolidation and maintenance of school infrastructure: most of AECO's chairpersons and parents in all the districts mention the participation of the mayors' offices in the management of resources to build school premises, classrooms and mantain them at their further maintenance. Since PROHECO does not provide infrastructure resources, the role of mayors' offices in this area would seem to be central either by means of direct donation or by their contribution to manage resources vis-à-vis third parties. The second area where the mayors' offices might seem to have an important role in some municipalities is in the selection of teacher staff, and, to a lesser extent, in the selection of AECOs authorities. As already stated, in two of the municipalities (municipalities 2 and 4), all the communities report that AECO's assembly selects teachers recommended or approved by the mayors and that teachers are changed when local political authorities are renewed. In two communities of municipality 2 they report, as well, that teachers were directly hired by the mayor without the participation of the assembly. Mayors' offices thus appear in

these two municipalities as an instance participating in teachers' retention or turnover. The contribution of the offices of mayors has apparently had the same presence and characteristics in all municipalities, however, in the case of teachers appointments it seems to have mainly developed in communities where AECOs have not developed their capacities for participation and self-government. This aspect will be resumed later.

3. School profile

All Basic Education schools included in the sample teach 1st to 6th grades except for a PROHECO school in municipality 2 that teaches also, 7th and 8th grades in the framework of the pilot extension of the programme to cover the 3rd cycle of Basic Education. As a general rule, schools hours are from 8 AM to 1 PM, although there are some exceptions probably related to a recent change in the school timetable proposed by the Ministry of Education, according to which, in municipality 3, four schools -2 of them, regular rural schools- state that they work from 8 AM to 3 PM and every fifteen days, on Saturdays from 9 to 11 AM[1].

As a general rule, school conditions are poor. However, there were differences by municipality. Those of municipality 2 have a relatively acceptable infrastructure in terms of their capacity to accommodate the roll, apart from having basic services. In municipality 3, facilities are deteriorated; the furniture is reported in bad condition and insufficient. In municipality 4, the situation is even more critical since most of the schools do not have facilities of their own; they work in family homes or in premises lent and have few pieces of property and instructional materials.

As regards access, journeys to schools are a complicated matter in all the communities. The community having the best conditions is the one located in municipality 2, since routes are secure and, according to the testimonies, without crime. In this area, streams are dangerous only in winter. Instead,

1 In 2014 a Basic Education school day reform with two daily lessons blocks was launched. 8AM to 11:30AM and from 1PM to 3PM from Mondays to Fridays. At the time of field work, this school day was not widespread in all education centres in the country, and according to journalistic information, it was resisted by parents and teachers.

in municipalities 3 and 4, the route becomes dangerous due to streams and crime.

Thus, it is noted that both with reference to the infrastructure conditions and access, the situations detected might be associated with human development levels of the municipalities included in the sample, with the suggesting that socioeconomic inequalities are also found in the educational system.

In municipality 4, teachers who work at PROHECO schools are mostly high school graduates who state they are studying at the University. Municipalities 2 and 3 have teachers having graduated from a Teacher Training School, who mostly state they have studied or are studying to obtain a degree in Education. This last category includes those teachers of the school in municipality 2 offering 7th and 8th grades of Basic Secondary Education. It is worth mentioning that the lowest teacher qualification level has been detected in the municipality with the lowest human development index and a high rate of teacher turnover within the sample. This would clearly indicate the reproduction of socioeconomic inequalities in the education system.

As far as teacher seniority in schools, in municipality 3, most teachers are working the the schools since they were created and report no changes ever since. On the contrary, in municipalities 2 and 4, it is reported that teachers have been working there for the last 2 or 3 years. This information is consistent with the sample's selection criteria previously mentioned.

4. PROHECO's operation

4.1 School creation

PROHECO schools participating in the sample were created between 1999, when the Programme was created, and 2009. Most of schools show a creation and consolidation pattern with similar characteristics, which accounts for the participation of the communities in the creation of schools, although this

participation appears to have different weight and characteristics depending on the municipalities.

In Municipality 3, the active role of communities, officials and PROHECO in the installation of the centres is highlighted. In Municipality 4, the mayors appear to have a model that combines the active role in school creation. Municipalities 2 and 3 appear to be a model combining the participation of the community, of PROHECO's officials and local authorities. The observations are consistent with the assumptions used for sample selection: in contexts of a higher institutionalization of the Programme, more important community participation is shown, and in less institutionalized contexts, the human development level contributes to explain the differences in the community participation degrees.

In general, centres initiated their activities in family homes or in seats of religious congregations (all the communities of the three municipalities, except one, reported the presence of religious catholic or evangelist groups). As resources were received and managed, they built their own buildings. In Municipality 4, two were initiated as regular schools. When resources for the construction of the building are made available, after the creation of the educational centre, they usually come from the local mayor office, the Honduran Social Investment Fund (FHIS) -by means of the mayor's office intervention- or some donation that may be in cash or in building materials. In many cases, these funding sources are added to the community's workforce contribution. It is worth stating that PROHECO does not subsidize the construction of buildings or classrooms, therefore the resources for school infrastructure must be managed by the AECOs. This may be related to the infrastructure deficiencies shown by the school infrastructure census.

4.2 The AECOs

AECOs school boards are made up of 5 to 7 members. The way in which they have been constituted and their actual responsibilities vary among the schools of the three municipalities within the scope of the study. As regards how they were created, AECO's school boards in municipalities 2 and 3 were elected in assemblies. While in municipality 4, only two members of the board

were elected in this way. The remaining ones, according to the interviewees, were chosen by the mayor or the teacher. In two schools of the same municipality, two AECO's school boards were removed because they refused to accept the appointment of teachers by the mayor.

As regards the role of AECOs in the appointment of teachers, the field work also shows differences among the municipalities and schools. Only in municipality 3, interviewees report that teachers were elected by AECOs Assemblies; in municipality 4, on the contrary, they report that they were elected by the mayors[2] and in one case by the district office, while in municipality 2 the teachers were proposed by the promoter and approved by the mayor, it is reported. In these two last municipalities, interviewees state that the teacher positions are "political positions" and when the government orientation changes, the teachers are changed as well[3].

4.3 PROHECO's resources management and administration.

At the time of carrying out the field work, the schools were only receiving the payment of teachers' salaries. In general, teachers' payment is made every three months, which the interviewees recognize as the frequency according to which PROHECO transfers resources to AECOs. This representation is in contrast with the information analysed in chapter IV of this document which reports monthly transfers except for the first transfer of the year that effectively covers the first three-month period. In very few cases, interviewees report a monthly payment and several sources stated that delays are very usual.

As already said, until 2013, the schools received an additional fund of 450 lempiras for one-teacher schools and 600 lempiras for schools with multiple teachers. However, in municipality 4, there is a school that receives an amount for consumables by the mayor's office, it is reported.

2 One of the teachers appointed in this way has a direct relationship with the local political authority.

3 Also in a Pre-Basic school of municipality 4, discrimination against children because of their parents' political orientation is reported.

The availability and use of the funds is formally in the hands of AECO's chairperson and treasurer, and in all municipalities the promoter monitors the resources, checks the expense reports and sends them to the department coordinator. The field work made it possible to detect that promoters have a privileged position in this process because of their twofold role of supervisors and recipients of information on transfer dates and amounts. In municipalities 2 and 4, probably due to the low literacy level reported, many times, it is the promoters -or the teachers- who inform the presidents about the amount to be paid and, in very few cases, who draw the checks to be later signed by AECO's authorities.

Consequently, the effectiveness and rationale of controlling procedures are very different in the three municipalities. In municipality 4, several irregularities are mentioned. For example, there are four teachers in a school where, according to the number of pupils only two were necessary. In two schools, the teachers report that they are paid every three months, but that they cash-in the amount corresponding to two months, and pay the rest to the AECO's chairperson and treasurer. It is also reported that in one of the regular rural schools of the same municipality, the teacher is paid through PROHECO. In this municipality, and in municipality 2, the parents interviewed say they do not have more information about the use of PROHECO's funds which, according to the regulations, cannot be used for anything but salary payment.

Discrepancies encountered between the formal specifications and the real operation in two of the municipalities, are related to the hypothesis based on which the municipalities were selected. The hypothesis stated that a higher teacher turnover would be related to a lower level of institutionalization of the Programme. The results of the field work would apparently confirm that in two of the municipalities with a higher teacher turnover, institutional practices are far from the formal specifications and show a low autonomy by the AECOs. Also, they would suggest that a higher degree of institutionalization can contribute to compensate the effects of socioeconomic environment on the Programme's implementation.

5. Other resources. Joint-management of local and families' resources.

The transfers made to the AECOs are for the sole purpose of paying teachers' salaries. To complement the resources transferred by PROHECO, the families must manage resources to build the school, enlarge it and carry out maintenance tasks. At the same time, there are other minor regular costs associated with schooling paid by families and, in some cases, by teachers. These are: the cleaning of the premises, the input of statistical information about school's students –in system where its lack of connectivity is accessed from stores selling Internet connection and for which parents or teachers must pay a fee per student- the copies of instructional materials and the printing of completion certificates of sixth grade, a document highly valued until recent times because it certified the end of mandatory Basic Education. To cope with all these expenses, approximately 15 lempiras are paid monthly or quarterly, at the three municipalities. Families also contribute with work: fathers paint, put fences or do maintenance works and mothers clean the school.

In all communities, there are families receiving government assistance such as the Bono 10 Mil[4], a transfer of money subject to children's schooling. All schools receive School Meals[5], consisting in the provision of some of the ingredients making up a basic diet, complemented by others provided by their families. Meals are distributed by the government's programme to a head city and the families have to take care of their transportation to communities, either by paying transport fees –which are not low- or by transporting them by their own means, sometimes using animals. In turn, mothers are organized in shifts to prepare the daily meal.

4 Bono 10 Mil. Its formal name is "Programa Presidencial de Educación, Salud y Nutrición". It is a Programme of money transfers to families with school age children and teenagers (6 to 18 years) on condition to be enrolled and attend a formal or not formal public education centre. Moreover, it must ensure health care and nutrition for children up to 5 years, pregnant women and postpartum women.

5 The School Meal Programme is aimed at improving education, nutrition and health levels of children in the 18 Honduran departments. This is achieved by daily delivering nutritionally balanced meals to public education centres, fostering and strengthening the community's organization and improving conditions and sanitation of the school and community's environment. (World Food Programme - www.wfp/es). It is implemented within the framework of an agreement between the Honduran Government and the United Nations World Food Programme.

This kind of organization to manage additional resources is common to both PROHECO and regular schools. It responds to an explicit policy of the national education authorities, which establishes that resource management at educational centres is part of the National Budget for Education[6]. The School Educational Plan (PEC) and the Annual Operation Plan (POA) are planning tools which consist in action plans including resource management. In this field work, all instances -local authorities, PROHECO schools and regular schools- were interviewed about the use of such tools. All actors without exception expressed they knew them, although a thorough analysis of all the information gathered might indicate that, at least at the school level, these instruments are merely formal.

6. Parents' associations

In addition to the AECO, PROHECO schools have Parents' Associations, an organization typical of all public schools. At the education centres of Municipalities 2 and 3 under study, these organizations are made up of mothers who are organized to clean the school or to prepare school meals as mentioned in the previous paragraph. In municipality 3 it is also pointed out that there is an adequate coordination between the AECOs and the Parents' Associations. In this municipality, there are cases in which the AECOs and the Parents' Associations have the same president. The division of tasks between AECOs and parents' associations is based on that AECOs manage PROHECO's funds and call meetings to deal with matters related to the Programme, whereas Parents' Associations coordinate the organization of families to contribute to school maintenance and other activities which imply donating time or small amounts of cash money for different purposes, as mentioned in the previous paragraph.

6 Established in the Public Education Funding Rules, chapter on Education Fundamental Act.

7. Relationship of PROHECO schools with the administration of the official system

The guidelines for curricular planning laid down by the Ministry of Education stipulate a learning sequence based on the National Basic Curriculum Design (DCNB) which is sent to schools as a guide. Teachers of all the education centres visited in the three municipalities state that they use these guides to carry out planning tasks. The teaching sequence is controlled by regular tests which the students take with material supplied by the Ministry of Education. The guides are known by all teachers, although some of them state they do not know their source. In most of the schools of the tree municipalities, teachers have copies of these guides.

The Ministry of Education also distributes Spanish, Mathematics and Social Sciences textbooks for students. Although there are differences in the availability of books of some subjects and as to the number of books, it is not possible to calculate them properly, due to the nature of the information gathered at the qualitative study -which to a great extent is based on actors' perceptions. In general, textbooks are used by the students at school. They are not allowed to take them home because teachers fear books would be damaged or because it is uncertain when they will be replaced. Teachers agree in pointing out that available books are insufficient.

In general, schools of the three municipalities are subject to regular tests by the Ministry of Education. However, all schools, except one in Municipality 4, state they do not know the results and indicate these tests do not have an impact on their practices. As regards teacher training, in municipality 3, they state they have been trained in the teaching of Spanish -but with limited resources- by both the Ministry of Education and PROHECO. In municipality 2, both Spanish and Mathematics; in municipality 4 only PEC and POA techniques are taught.

8. Parents' opinions in connection with equity and quality

Parents at the communities of the three municipalities where the field work was conducted consider they receive an acceptable quality service compared with regular schools and they do not notice a big contrast in contents or other aspects related to education. They indicate as positive traits: the low repetition levels, the fact that class time is not lost, and they show high esteem for teachers' responsibility. They also agree that the proximity of parents with teachers and the parents' power to control teachers' work and attendance – facilitated by the hiring methodology- are among PROHECO's advantages in comparison with other schools. In municipalities 2 and 3, the existence of a fluid relationship between communities and teachers is highlighted as well. In municipality 4, although the above mentioned advantages are recognized, there are ambiguities derived from the existence of tensions between teachers and communities since it is difficult for parents to control teachers' attendance. Tensions in this municipality were foreseeable taking into account the secondary role of the AECOs in the hiring of teachers.

At the same time, inequities are noticed in the quality of infrastructure and the availability of teaching material, all of which have an impact on the quality of education, as stated by interviewees. In municipalities 2 and 3, the fact that teachers receive a salary lower than other teachers at ordinary schools is regarded as a deficit. In municipality 3, the pupil-teacher ratio is considered a negative trait of PROHECO since it is perceived as a restriction that inexists for regular schools. However, in municipalities 2 and 3, the possibility that the schools become official is not considered a convenient option, but seen as a loss of the benefits the Programme provides. In municipality 4, on the contrary, becoming official is seen as a possibility to reduce the existing tensions originated in political conflicts.

There is broad consensus in that the distance between the communities and the localities with Basic Secondary School supply is detrimental to their children's educational opportunities. Therefore, they have a positive view of the extension of PROHECO to the Third Cycle.

9. PROHECO schools compared to regular rural schools

The comparison of PROHECO schools with regular schools shows a series of similarities and differences. As regards similarities, as we have already mentioned both kinds of schools rank similarly in the scale in terms of enrolled students and teaching staff. In both cases, there are schools with one to three teachers and working in the multi-grade modality.

At both types of school, resource management for maintenance, cleaning, input of statistical information, printing of teaching material and certificates, and the School Meals are activities carried out by the Parents' Associations. These associations are present at both institution models, regardless of the existence of AECOs. Their duties in connection with school activities and resource management seem to be similar[7].

For both teachers and families of both school types, the district office is a clear reference in teaching regulation matters. In other words, the division and specificity of the tasks between the district's authority and PROHECO's department coordination seems to be clear to the actors. The information gathered does not allow pointing out significant differences in connection with the distribution of bibliographic material or the scope of training actions in one school modality or the other.

Among the differences to be noted, it is worth mentioning the seniority of regular rural schools, established for decades in the communities. As for teaching staff, regular rural schools with more than one teacher have the role of principal. Principals earn a salary higher than the one of a regular teacher. Teachers at regular rural schools have longer seniority than their peers at PROHECO, so it can be said that they enjoy greater employment stability. In relation to the methods to obtain a position, the information gathered permits to sustain that they have been appointed through formal competition procedures in the district. Only in municipality 4 a special situation is reported –already mentioned in other paragraphs– a teacher of a school not included in PROHECO might be paid by the Programme. This

7 It is reported that a regular rural school at municipality 4 has an Education Development Council (CODE) with duties similar to COMDE's, but at the school level.

teacher replaced another teacher carrying out high level administrative work at the time of the survey.

As regards infrastructure, the differences do not show a pattern –up to where it may be inferred from available information– whether the school belongs to one or other institutional model. The quality of infrastructure seems to be directly related to the socio-economic development of each community. However, all communities have limited or insufficient infrastructure, as has already been ascertained from the data gathered. In municipality 3, building conditions of regular schools are similar to those of PROHECO, in municipality 2 the differences seem to tip the balance in favour of PROHECO schools, whereas in municipality 4 the opposite happens. It is worth mentioning that in this municipality, three PROHECO schools lack their own premises.

Family aid governmental programmes seem to reach communities served by PROHECO schools and those served by regular rural schools as well. The only difference reported is identified at two regular schools, one in municipality 4 and the other in municipality 3, where the presence of the "Free Tuition Fee contribution" is mentioned[8].

In terms of school life supervision by the state, the teachers interviewed mention more frequently the presence of district office representatives in assessments and visits; which suggests that regular schools receive closer supervision. This could be related to the poor accessibility conditions of communities where PROHECO schools are located and the absence of specific measures to compensate this situation.

As regards the perception of the quality of the service received, the communities of each institutional type compared consider that the other institution model has similar quality and kind of services. The more significant differences reported by parents and teachers refer to working conditions and teachers' degrees. They are aware that PROHECO's teachers receive lower salaries, fewer benefits than teachers at regular rural schools and that their professional qualifications tend to be lower.

8 "Matrícula Gratis" is a program of the Ministry of Education intended to replace the resources families contributed to schools as enrolment fees at official educational centres. In 2012 it was discontinued because of problems at schools with renderings of accounts. Nevertheless, some centres report that they still receive such resources.

To conclude, the more significant differences between both institutional models are related to particularities inherent to the design of the PROHECO Programme, its hiring modes, teachers' salaries and their consequences on employment stability.

VI. Profile of AECOs' chairpersons

This chapter analyses some of the characteristics related to the implementation of PROHECO at the local level. Since the Programme has AECOs as a distinctive feature and its chairperson as a main actor, we seek to outline the profile of these actors, highlighting their more outstanding characteristics, their capacities and relationship with the community. AECOs' chairpersons' awareness and understanding of the Programme's scope and procedures is also addressed.

The importance of building a profile of these individuals lies in the fact that they are, at the same time, part of the community and involved in the management of funds and school administration. The study of their profile allows understanding an important aspect of the exercise of the autonomy developed at schools within PROHECO's framework.

Since there is no preliminary information gathered about PROHECO's chairpersons, a structured questionnaire to guide interviews in the field was designed. To conduct the survey, an intentional sample was drawn according to the types of municipalities described in the introductory chapter in this document. The sample drawn consisted in the selection of 41 municipalities distributed in 4 departments of the Honduras' western area (Comayagua, Intibucá, Lempira and Santa Bárbara). From the total number of municipalities in the region, only the most typical from each of the four groups were drawn. Although this is not a representative sample from a statistical point of view, selecting the most typical municipalities from each cluster consists of a clear and transmissible sampling criteria, that enables an adequate interpretation of statistical data while also accounting for the heterogeneity of municipalities. The selection of departments was based on logistics limitations and sought to avoid the dispersion interviewers in the field. The departments selected meet the condition of sharing borders, having a diversity of

municipalities in regard to the typology used in the study and having a significant number of schools to optimize the relationship between the number of interviewers and the AECOs' chairpersons surveyed.

Table VI. 1 shows the composition of the sample, as well as the number of interviews effectively responded, and the break-down of the information obtained.

Table VI. 1 Surveys to be conducted according to the design and surveys conducted

		Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Non-Classified	Total
Surveys to be conducted	Freq.	104	78	40	89	19	330
	%	31,5	23,6	12,1	27,0	5,8	100,0
Surveys conducted	Freq.	47	38	21	58	18	182
	%	25,8	20,9	11,5	31,9	9,9	100,0

The following analysis is organized in three sections. First, it is sought to account for the profiles of AECOs' chairpersons, as regards certain socio-demographic indicators, their connection with the community and the discharge of their duties. Then, focus is made on the participation of such actors in the creation of AECOs and their composition. Finally, the aspects related to the exercise of autonomy are analysed.

1. Main characteristics

Socio-demographic profile

First, the profiles of AECOs' chairpersons elected by their communities are analysed. This section focuses on their socio-demographic profile, analysing whether there are characteristics common to all chairpersons.

A clear trend to choose male chairpersons (74.2%) over women may be highlighted. As regards age, half of the respondents were between 35 and 49 years old, with 42 being the average age. The other half is distributed between younger and older persons.

Half of respondents do not consider they belong to a specific population group, but among those who do, most state that they belong to the Lenca group. The chairpersons who define themselves as part of that group account for 41.8% of the total. Here it must be indicated that the survey was conducted in a specific geographical area of the Honduran territory, and this indicator could reflect a reality of the area.

Most chairpersons are married or in a free union (90%). As expected in rural areas there are very few single-person households; these tend to be big. The average size is 6 people. Moreover, the average number of children is 5 (whether they live with their parents or not).

AECOs' chairpersons have children in school age who attend PROHECO schools. Over 75% of chairpersons have children between ages 5 and 12. Among them, 95% attend school and almost all of the children attending school do so at PROHECO schools.

AECOs' chairpersons are not educationally active, considering this activity as the attendance to an education centre. Less than 3% attend school currently. Their level of education is mainly Basic Education. Most of them attended this school level. Thirty nine per cent of chairpersons completed Basic Education; half of them attended school but did not finish their studies (Chart VI.1).

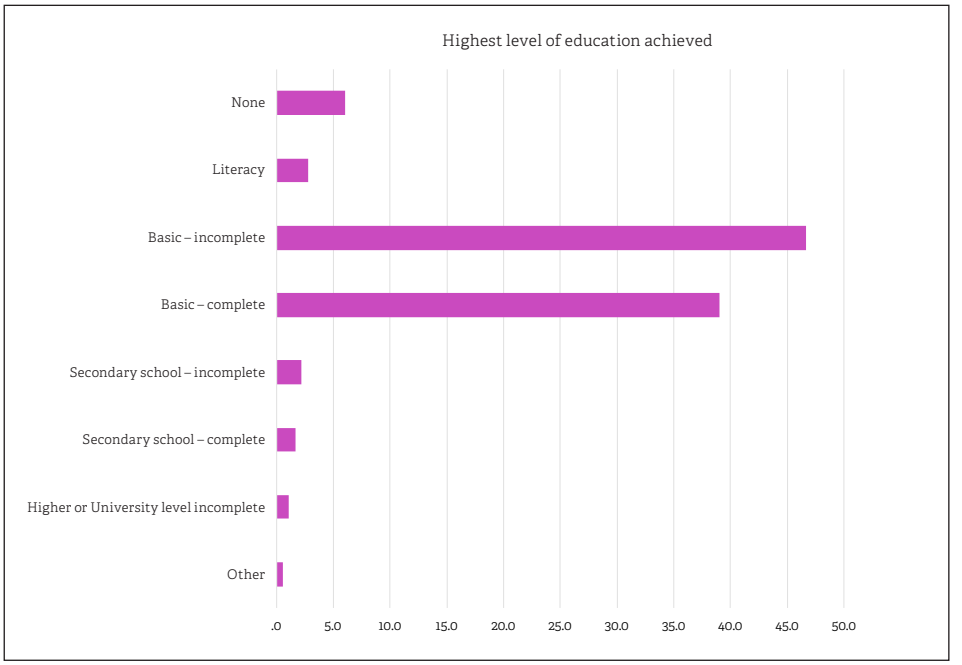
Out of this common trend to attend Basic Education, only 5% was admitted to a Secondary School or a higher level and, on the opposite side, 6% never attended formal school.

Although these characteristics account for a low educational level, it does not seem to differ from the environment. While among AECOs' chairpersons interviewed –as noted in the previous paragraph- 55% has not completed the Basic level; 49% of the Honduran rural population in 2011 aged more than 15 had not completed that level (SITEAL, based on Household Survey, Honduras, 2011). Thus, apparently, their educational level does not differentiate them from their environment.

Setting aside their formal education, they have received some instruction through training courses. Some chairpersons have attended courses during the year, particularly job-related training courses (22.5%).

As regards their occupation, most carry out agricultural work; for example, coffee and wheat harvesting.

Chart VI.1. AECO's chairpersons education level



Source: AECO's chairpersons' interview. IIEP-UNESCO, 2014.

Relationship with the community

AECO's chairpersons seem to be persons with a high level of insertion in the community and leadership skills. This may be observed through different characteristics described below.

Most of them have been part of their communities for many years. Almost two-thirds of chairpersons were born in their communities or arrived at

them in their childhood. Also, 83% made part of those communities at the time when AECOs were created.

They tend to participate in different organizations (community organizations, work cooperatives, employers' organizations, political, social and recreational organizations). Seventy per cent of chairpersons participate in at least one of them and mainly in a leadership role. Thus, half of the chairpersons are leaders of some other organization.

Moreover, chairpersons know what is happening in the community through their exchanges with relatives, friends, neighbours and other members of the community. Nine out of ten chairpersons mention this means of communication. They also receive information, to a lesser extent, through comments made by authorities, both PROHECO's promoters (3 out of 10) and municipal authorities (2 out of 10).

These characteristics seem to account for people with a high insertion in the community, i.e., community leaders. Although their answers cannot be compared with those typical of other members of the community, who are not AECOs' chairpersons -which would allow for knowing the extent to which their characteristics distinguish them from the rest of the community-it is thought-provoking that when asked about what aspects they consider relevant in the appointment of chairpersons more than 75% of chairpersons consider they were chosen because they know their communities, almost half of them because of their management or organizational skills, and the other half because of their experience as leaders (Table VI.2). Furthermore, only 14% consider their relationship with the promoter relevant to appointment. An even lower percentage thinks their educational level was relevant to appointment. These responses are consistent with the profiles built up-to-now.

Table VI.2. Aspects deemed important to be appointed as chairpersons by members of the community (multiple choice)

	Frequency	Percentage
Knowledge of the community	142	78,0
Management skills	106	58,2
Experience as leader	88	48,4
Relationship with organizations	49	26,9
Relationship with promoters	26	14,3
Ability to obtain resources	26	14,3
Others	21	11,5
Education level	16	8,8
Don't know	4	2,2

Source: AECO's chairpersons' interview. IIEP-UNESCO, 2014.

Analysing the three aspects together, it is noted that half of the chairpersons meet the conditions of participating at least in another organization simultaneously, know what is happening in the community through relatives, friends, neighbours and other members of the community and consider they have been chosen because of the knowledge they have of their community.

Discharge of duties as chairperson

AECOs' chairpersons must be elected every two years and can be reelected only once. At the end of such period a new chairperson must be appointed.

However, the expected change of AECOs' chairpersons was not observed in the survey. Forty one per cent hold the chair for more than 4 years. Moreover, at least 60% of chairpersons have been in this position for more than 2 years, i.e., they have already been reelected once.

Although chairpersons tend to be reelected, they have not held office at AECOs before. This appointment, for a specific role, would encourage the hypothesis that they have a different profile from other members of the community, and also from other AECO members, since there is no rotation among the different positions.

2. About AECOs

Although most chairpersons were part of the AECO at the time of creation, one third of them do not remember the year of foundation. Among those who remember the date, half of them report that AECOs were created up to year 2000 and the remaining half, after that date to the present.

In most cases (82%) it is reported that there were no schools in the community before the creation of the PROHECO schools. The initiative to set up an AECO originates, mostly, in the members of the community (Table VI.4). Moreover, the municipality seems to be a significant actor in their origin. In contrast, the responses do not distinguish PROHECO's promoter as a significant actor at the time of creation.

Most AECOs consist of 5 to 7 people (81%). The positions more difficult to fill are those of vice-chairpersons, and then controllers and treasurers.

Table VI.4. Initiative in the creation of AECO (multiple choice)

	Frequency	Percentage
People in the community	124	68,1
Municipality	75	41,2
PROHECO promoter	41	22,5
Don't know / don't remember	29	15,9
Ministry of Education	24	13,2
District Office	13	7,1
Other	10	5,5

Source: AECO's chairpersons' interview. IIEP-UNESCO, 2014.

3. Exercise of autonomy

This section includes two aspects of AECOs' chairpersons' exercise of autonomy. On the one hand, the statements of chairpersons about their own knowledge of the rules governing PROHECO's operation, their duties and obligations as chairpersons, as well as the training they have received. On the other hand, the effective knowledge chairpersons have about the rules, which may be grasped from their answers to questions about these procedures throughout the survey.

Knowledge of PROHECO's rules and training received

The knowledge of rules governing PROHECO's operations, as well as the duties as AECOs' chairpersons, is basic to the exercise of autonomy at PROHECO schools. In this line of thought, it is worth mentioning that half of the chairpersons consider they have insufficient knowledge to carry out the more frequent tasks (Table VI.5).

Table VI.5. Knowledge of rules and duties

	Frequency	Percentage
Full knowledge	23	12,6
Sufficient knowledge	71	39,0
Some knowledge, but insufficient	81	44,5
No knowledge	7	3,8
Total	182	100,0

This is even more surprising considering that most chairpersons have received some training about rules and duties (80%). It would be advisable to know more details about the training received, subject matters covered, and time when it is carried out.

Moreover, 20% has not received training and these represent a significant portion of those who consider that they do not have full or sufficient knowledge to carry out their work. There also are other chairpersons who, having received training, do not consider they have sufficient knowledge to discharge their duties.

Table VI.6. Attendance to training activities, according to knowledge of rules

		Received training		Total
		Yes	No	
Knows rules	Fully or sufficiently	63,1	23,5	51,6
	Insufficient or no knowledge	36,9	76,5	48,4
Total		100	100	100

Source: AECO's chairpersons' interview. IIEP-UNESCO, 2014..

Knowledge of the rules

A number of questions were made in the interviews to ascertain the degree of knowledge of the Programme's rules and procedures by the chairpersons on matters such as the appointment, time of duration and methodology for removal of chairpersons and teachers. Questions on fund management issues were also addressed.

Twenty-one questions were asked in total. In a scale from 0 to 10, where the latter would indicate that all questions were answered correctly, barely more than half of respondents (58%) would receive a 7 or higher mark (Table VI.7).

Table VI.7. Marks received from possible 21 correct answers

Points	Frequency	Percentage
2,4	1	0,5
3,3	1	0,5
3,8	6	3,3
4,3	6	3,3
4,8	7	3,8
5,2	9	4,9
5,7	15	8,2
6,2	19	10,4
6,7	12	6,6
7,1	32	17,6
7,6	25	13,7
8,1	21	11,5
8,6	20	11,0
9,0	6	3,3
9,5	2	1,1
Total	182	100

Source: AECO's chairpersons' interview. IIEP-UNESCO, 2014

About the chairperson

Chairpersons are certain that it is the parents' assembly duty to choose AECOs' chairpersons. This is a rule known by all of them. A significant portion of chairpersons (approximately 78%) agree on the time for which the appointment is made: two years. They also know, in general, the methods for removal of chairpersons (80%).

However, the same degree of certainty is not shown in other subjects. One of them is whether prior approval or consent from the PROHECO's promoter is needed to become a chairperson. Another one is the re-election of chairpersons.

In connection with the first item, 46% of chairpersons consider that it is not necessary to have prior authorization or consent, while 52% considers it is (Table VI.8). This difference in opinions is not random; instead, it seems to be associated with knowing the rule (the statement about their own knowledge) and the condition of being leaders in other organizations besides the AECO. Among those who consider that no authorization from the promoter is required, there is a higher probability of being leaders; whereas among those considering the authorization of the promoter is needed, there is a lower probability of being leaders in another organization.

Table VI.8. Participation or not in another organization as leader, according to the answer to the question on the need of promoters' approval

		Participates as leader		Total
		No	Yes	
Authorization from promoter	Yes	60,6	42,0	51,6
	No	36,2	56,8	46,2
	No answer / Don't know	3,2	1,1	2,1
Total		**100,0**	**100,0**	**100,0**

Source: AECO's chairpersons' interview. IIEP-UNESCO, 2014.

Furthermore, among those considering there is no need to have the promoters' prior authorization, there is a higher probability of having a self-perception of full knowledge of the rules, or at least sufficient; whereas among those considering that the authorization is required, the probability of having insufficient knowledge is greater (Table VI.9).

Table VI.9. Declaration of their own knowledge of the rules, according to answer to the question on the need of prior promoters' authorization

		Knowledge of rules (yes/no)		Total
		Fully or sufficiently	Insufficient or none	
Promoters' authorization	Yes	45,7	58,0	51,6
	No	52,1	39,8	46,2
	No answer don't know	2,2	2,3	2,2
Total		**100,0**	**100,0**	**100,0**

Source: AECO's chairpersons' interview. IIEP-UNESCO, 2014.

As regards the second item, the chairperson's re-election, the fact that once he/she is elected he/she may hold office and can be re-elected only once is barely known (7.1%) (Table VI.10). 9 out of 10 state that the chairperson may re-elected the numer of times as necessary or until the community decides otherwise. Seventy-two per cent thinks that, after being elected, they can re-main in office until the community decides otherwise, and almost 20% think they may be re-elected as many times as it is deemed necessary. This last idea appears to be consistent with the fact that 40% of chairpersons have exceeded their term in office.

Table VI.10. Chairpersons' re-election

Continues in office until community decides otherwise	72,0
As many times as necessary	19,8
Can be re-elected once	7,1
Don't know	0,5
No answer	0,5
Total	**100,0**

Source: AECO's chairpersons' interview. IIEP-UNESCO, 2014.

In this case, no association with variables that might explain the differences were found, it is a widespread behaviour. This makes it particularly difficult to interpret whether answers are reflecting the actors' perceptions of the rules or an existing situation.

About the teachers

In the case of rules related to teachers, most chairpersons know that the parents' assembly chooses them (86.3%) and that they are hired for one year (85%) (Table VI.11). They also know that they may be dismissed by the AECO, if this is approved by the assembly (92%) but they cannot be dismissed by the promoter (81.3%) or by the municipality (86%).

However, there is no agreement about the need of approval or recommendation of teachers, both by the promoter or the municipality, or the possibility that they be dismissed by the District's Office.

To sum up, there are some aspects of operation rules on which most chairpersons agree, showing a good use of them. In general, there is agreement among chairpersons about the functions of the assembly in all aspects surveyed (appointment of chairperson, appointment of teachers and, in general, the rules for removal). There is also a high level of agreement about the methods for removal. In this sense, chairpersons agree on the fact that the promoter or the Department coordinator cannot remove AECO's chairperson without the approval of the parents' assembly. Furthermore, they agree on that AECO, through the parents' assembly, can dismiss teachers, but the promoter or the municipality cannot do so. As far as these areas are concerned, the answers are accurate.

However, there is a low level of awareness of the need for consensus among different actors for the election of chairpersons and teachers, and with regard to the role of the District Office.. The answers are not as homogenous or conclusive. There is no agreement about whether it is necessary or not to have a prior authorization or consent of the promoter to be elected chairperson or teacher. The District's Office seems to be an actor qualitatively different from the promoter or the municipality, above all in connection with teachers:

Eighty one per cent consider teachers must have the recommendation of the Education District's Office and most chairpersons state that such agency cannot dismiss teachers. In turn, 2 out of 3 respondents answer that promoters or municipalities cannot dismiss teachers either. This high level of agreement on the role of the District's Office may be explained by the formal steps necessary to submit professional background or credentials to get a position.

Table VI.11. Answers to selected questions about teacher appointment and removal

	Frequency	Percentage
Parents' assembly chooses chairpersons (Yes)	177	97,3
AECOs can remove teachers (Yes)	168	92,3
Promoter or coordinator can remove chairpersons (No)	159	87,4
Municipalities can remove teachers (No)	157	86,3
Teachers: parents choose them at the assembly (Yes)	157	86,3
Promoters can remove teachers (No)	148	81,3
District's Offices or municipalities can remove teachers (No)	120	65,9

Source: AECO's chairpersons' interview. IIEP-UNESCO, 2014

Fund administration

When asked about the need to obtain help to understand the expense reports they sign, 55% of chairpersons declare to always need help and 25% state to need it sometimes.. Most of those who need assistance turn to the promoter (70%).

They do not appear to have a clear knowledge about the source of the funds used to pay teachers. Only 42% state that they come from the National Ministry of Education, but 35% state they do not know their source, and about 15% mention other bodies, mostly international agencies.

There is certainty among chairpersons about the possibility of checking, whenever it is necessary, the balance of the AECOs' current account and about the fact that the promoter cannot make bank transactions using AECO's account. There is no such certainty about the need to request the promoter's authorization to know the balance of the current account (44% of respondents think they need authorization).

The promoter's duties (to make reports for the payment of teachers and training of AECOs' members) are known to most chairpersons.

To summarize, it can be seen that AECOs chairpersons are usually community leaders. Moreover, considering that to develop autonomy, knowledge is an important asset, it was detected that not all chairpersons receive training. It is particularly disturbing that a significant portion of chairpersons feel they do not have sufficient knowledge to carry out their duties.

In connection with their awareness on the rules and the administration of funds, it should be noted that there are subject matters known by the majority, while other areas are not known. The methods for appointment and removal of people from their positions are widely known by all, which could account for a high level of institutionalization. However, certain matters related to the position of the promoter in different phases of the decision making process may seem to vary according to the opinion of each chairperson. This shows a certain level of informality in each district; which should be taken into account for a proper operation of the Programme.

VII. Conclusions and forward-looking reflections

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the outcomes of each of the three components having made up PROHECO's case study methodological design. These conclusions are organized in three lines of thought related to the study objectives: 1) PROHECO's contribution to equity and to the quality of Honduran Pre-basic and Basic education supply; 2) the characteristics of the Programme in connection with the development of education management capacities by the local communities; 3) the contribution of this grant model, to school management efficiency. The fourth Section gathers some reflections about the strengths and weaknesses of the Programme as it is implemented, and points out some alternatives for improvement[1].

1. PROHECO's contribution to equity and to educational quality

- PROHECO makes a significant contribution to increase coverage of Basic Education and has become a significant component, though not very dynamic, of a non-universal Pre-Basic Education supply in rural areas.

PROHECO's Educational Centres for Basic Education cover at least 68% of the estimated potential universe and make up 14% of education supply in rural areas, excluding private education. In this sense, even considering that a minor percentage of PROHECO's education supply is located in urban areas, it can be said that the Programme contributes to extend the education service to the rural areas.

1 The research team thanks PROHECO's Coordination and its team for the possibility to discuss the conclusions of the research, which made it possible to prepare the conclusions set out in the final section.

Although in Pre-basic Education it is not possible to estimate the effective coverage compared to a potential universe, its contribution to the existing total education supply of non-private education centres is of approximately 15%, considering the enrolment rate of CCEPREB. This contribution corresponds to an education level which is far from the desired coverage for current standards; and, despite the fact that this level was made compulsory in 2012 and coverage is far from universal, PROHECO's enrolment rates have not shown significant increases over the last 4 years. There is not an increase in the enrolment rates for the second most important form of school in this educational level after regular schools, the CCEPREBs. In this regard, it seems that PROHECO and CCEPREB cannot escape the limitations of the Honduran educational system to expand schooling in this level, even when they represent alternatives with much lower costs than regular rural schools.

PROHECO's contribution to education supply is not homogeneous across the country's territory. In line with the objectives of the Programme, its presence has a relative higher importance in municipalities with lower human development indexes. In some departments, PROHECO's enrolment rate represents 20 to 30% of the total rural enrolment rate in the official network; whereas in other departments, it does not reach 7% of the total number of students.

- Although the stated focus of the Programme is on "geographically isolated rural areas", most of PROHECO's education supply does not meet the criteria established in the rules for installation.

Since its creation, PROHECO was defined as a policy focused on geographically isolated rural areas and was presented as an alternative to offer education to communities not covered by the regular system.

One of the conditions required to open a PROHECO school is that there are no other schools within a 3-km radius.

This criterion would intend to ensure complementarity among the different forms forms of education service provision. Nevertheless, an analysis of the geographical location of the Programme's schools has revealed that 72% of PROHECO schools supplying Pre-Basic education and 90% of PROHECO Basic Education schools –over the total schools for which georeferenced data

is available– are located less than 3 km from regular schools of the same level. Although the actual figures overlap between PROHECO's education supply and regular schools may be different from the ones resulting from incomplete information analysed in this study, the most conservative scenarios show that half of PROHECO's schools do not meet this regulation criterion.

Therefore, the imaginary widely spread among the actors covered by this study that "PROHECO schools are present in areas that have not been covered by regular schools" is to be reinterpreted. This representation could respond to other criteria. It can be held, in fact, that there are no regular schools in the areas where PROHECO schools are established and this deficiency is not only explained by distance or isolation but also by historical reasons related to coverage, possibly associated to the low capacity of the communities to claim for their right to education. In this sense, PROHECO may have been an effective mechanism to channel these claims.

Likewise, it is pertinent to recognize the limitations of the analysis carried out in this case study. First, it is unlikely that only one criterion based on geographical distance would be enough to account for all isolation situations existing in a country whose territory is characterized by geographical features such as hills, rivers and islands. The regulations do not recognize these situations, although the Programme's authorities -both at the national and local level- state that they bear them in mind at the time of deciding whether or not to open a school. A more detailed analysis of compliance with the regulations to identify those cases, in which a natural barrier can be considered a cause of geographical isolation, exceeds the scope of this study.

Second, it would be possible to question whether a 3-km radius is a reasonable distance when the purpose is to provide access to education for children between the ages of 4 and 11. Assuming that there are flat lands and good transportation conditions, the criterion laid out implies that, if regulations are complied with, the student will have to travel a minimum distance of 1.5 km to go from home to the nearest school, a daily trip of 3kms. These not very short distances can become an even greater obstacle to effective schooling when there are hilly terrains, subject to weather variations, in areas where the population travels mostly on foot or animals. In fact, accessibility to schools is one of the factors related to high absenteeism levels, of both

students and teachers in rural areas; it should not be discarded as a cause of the high dropout rates among the students served by PROHECO. This issue deserves further analysis.

Anyway, the results obtained call for a careful revision of the regulations inforced and their correspondence with the practices regulating the everyday application of the Programme, always taking into account the goal to promote a more equitable access to the right to education.

- Although the contribution of the Programme to the existing education supply is considerable, it shows limitations to achieve retention and completion of Basic Education of a high number of its students.

Students at PROHECO schools tend to pass grades in a lower proportion than those at regular rural schools, even though repetition rates are similar. Only in the first grade of Basic Education is the repetition rate high (over 10%), although the figures are similar to those of other rural schools. A remarkable feature at PROHECO is that students have a higher tendency to drop out of school. This impacts on enrolment rates, which show a successive decline from one grade to the next. For example, in 2012, while 24,886 children were enrolled in first grade, 14,845 were enrolled in sixth grade. It can be inferred that part of the important challenge to include all children at school is related to retaining children living in rural areas where PROHECO schools are located, and not only to increase the number of schools. Some of the reasons to understand the higher dropout rates are outlined in the following points.

- Although PROHECO contributes to extend the coverage in rural areas, it does so with a lower quality infrastructure.

Both at Pre-Basic and at Basic School, Honduran rural schools have serious quality deficits as regards infrastructure, which just covers half of the estimated needs. In turn, PROHECO schools are in a more precarious situation than regular rural schools.

This relatively worse condition is observed, particularly, in the quality of basic services (access to electricity, sewage, and access to drinking water), the state of the premises (lighting, ventilation, general condition, age of buildings, and others), and working conditions of sanitation facilities (urinals, sinks and sanitary devices). At Pre Basic education schools, also a lower

quality of the furniture may be noticed at PROHECO schools. At Basic education schools, the national average shows that furniture conditions are similar in the two kinds of schools. Nevertheless, each department's reality shows different situations, sometimes better at PROHECO schools and others just the opposite. This difference at department level, not detected in other infrastructure quality related aspects, would apparently be related to educational equipment that can be acquired more easily by local actors, depending on the organizational skills of such communities and their relationship with other funding sources, such as municipalities, non-profit organizations and others.

Finally, PROHECO schools face social and environmental threatens similar to those faced by regular rural schools.

- According to the information gathered in the qualitative study, it is usual to find teachers at PROHECO schools who do not have professional training and are less experienced than teachers working at regular rural schools.

Considering that the more disadvantaged groups live in rural and distant zones, it is likely that teachers lacking professional training will not achieve the same results as trained teachers. In addition, PROHECO schools' teachers reported having in general less years of seniority in teaching; therefore it would be possible to infer that they have less experience to deal with students, particularly, in the multi-grade modality. This lack of specific training poses a high risk to the quality of those schools' education supply.

- Teachers' high turnover rate at PROHECO schools would apparently not help the educational and learning processes, and could be detrimental to the quality of education supply.

The interviews carried out show the existence of higher teachers' turnover rates at PROHECO schools than at regular rural schools. At the same time, although the secondary sources analysed do not allow us to make a comparison between these types of schools, they reveal very low teachers' retention rates in municipalities where PROHECO is implemented. It also shows a decrease of the retention rate as of the year 2011. Moreover, at the interviews, matters related to those teachers' working conditions were deeply analysed: labour market flexibility models for hiring, salary reduction for absences,

low unionization rates, among others, that would account for this turnover. Actors also agree on the fact that turnover is related to changes in political leaderships of the Executive and Legislative Powers.

It is widely accepted that job security for teachers is a contributing factor, at least, to build the institution's identity and, in this sense, it is seen as an element that favours the quality of the educational project developed at the institutional level. In fact, in other cases of schools grants in different countries of Latin America, it is observed that one of the factors mainly contributing to the interruption of these programs has been the unfavourable working conditions suffered by teachers, which poses a serious challenge to Programme's sustainability.

- PROHECO seems to be a segment of education supply of lower quality than that of regular education, which has an adverse impact on the equity of the Honduran educational system.

Although PROHECO provides a significant contribution in terms of coverage of Basic Education, it could be asked what its contribution in terms of equality remains unanswered. Although it is present in areas where the regular system is also present, in comparison with other regular rural schools, PROHECO schools have worse infrastructure conditions, worse internal efficiency indicators and teachers who have neither training nor professional experience equivalent to that of other rural establishments. This could indicate that PROHECO is a lower quality segment of education supply which could lead to the increase of socio-economic inequalities in disadvantaged areas.

2. Development of education management capacities by local communities

- PROHECO is based on the pre-existence of community leaderships; even so, the organizational capacities of the communities where it is implemented are usually limited by the low educational level of AECO members and their lack of a clear understanding of the Programme's rules and procedures, thus limiting their capacity to exercise their powers autonomously.

In general, AECO Chairpersons covered by this study are community leaders who have the certainty that they have been elected for this position because of their leadership skills and knowledge of the community. While this shows the close link of the Programme to the social networks operating at the community level, it suggests a limited ability of the Programme to effectively empower parents and reconfigure preexisting power relationships.

When asked about the Programme's application, most AECO's chairpersons show they have an acceptable knowledge of its basic rules. There is agreement regarding the powers of the assembly to choose chairpersons and teachers, the procedures for removal from office for both positions, and on the powers to request information about the account balance every time this is deemed necessary. In spite of this agreement, it seems that they need help to feel reassured to exercise their powers, because almost half of the chairpersons interviewed considered their knowledge to be insufficient. This opinion is present even among those who received training, almost 80% of the sample. This trend seems to be consistent with the fact that 75% of the people surveyed state that they frequently need assistance to understand the details in the financial settlements they are required to sign.

But, at the same time, even when the chairpersons know the rules for appointing and removing staff, there seems to be an ambiguity regarding the roles of promoters and mayors. Although there is agreement among chairpersons about the assembly's sovereignty to appoint and remove chairpersons and teachers, there is no agreement about the need -or not- to have authorization or consent from promoters or mayors to be appointed in such positions. There seems to be a grey area as to whether the AECO assembly appoints candidates or endorses pre-candidates chosen by others.

- In view of the difficulties found by the AECOs to exercise their powers autonomously other actors interfere, particularly mayors, promoters or even teachers, in the decisions inherent to the AECOs. This could undermine the concept of community management on which the Programme is based.

Field observations complement the analysis of these ambiguities. First, it was noteworthy that in two out of the three municipalities analysed, promoters and mayors interfere in the election of the AECO's authorities, as well as in

the appointment and removal of teachers. In the same line of one of the hypothesis guiding the study, these situations have been observed in municipalities presenting a lower level of institutionalization of the Programme. In the cases covered by the study, the interference of promoters and mayors seems to be exercised by controlling candidates to the AECO's board and to the teacher positions, thus the assemblies would have to accept candidates in whose selection they have not participated.

This is consistent with the survey carried out among chairpersons who show a lower level of agreement as to whether it is necessary for a candidate to have the authorization of the mayor or promoter. It could be also backed by the fact that a significant portion of chairpersons consider that their knowledge is insufficient to carry out their tasks adequately. That is to say, chairpersons seem to know for certain that assemblies elect the candidates, what is unclear is if those candidates must have the approval of other actors or not.

In the same cities, promoters -and in some cases teachers- are directly involved in managerial tasks that are the responsibility of chairpersons or treasurers, for example, the calculation of the salary to be paid to each teacher or the drawing of checks for salary payment. Once again, this observation, drawn from the qualitative analysis, is consistent with the interviews conducted among chairpersons who, to a high rate, state they the need to help draw checks or to prepare expense reports, and turn to the promoter to resolve doubts.

It is important to notice that PROHECO's design vests in the field staff the power to audit AECOs' conformity to the mechanisms for the setting-up, election and renewal of authorities -that is to say, to control their legitimacy- and to adjust and control the flow of information and documentation about deposits and financial reports, as well as to train and provide advice to AECOs, and to serve as a liaison with local educational authorities. This fourfold power of promoters –to control legitimacy, to supervise the administration, to act as a consultant and trainer, and to act as a liaison with the district's authorities- seems to confer some "flexibility" to their powers which, depending on the community's strength, can override AECOs' autonomy.

- PROHECO falls within the framework of Honduras educational decentralization and is one of the most important precedents in terms of community management; however, its institutional characteristics

turn it into a Programme subject to the fluctuations of politics and political parties, without guarantees of improvements to education quality at the local level.

Although PROHECO has rules and procedures established in codes, the operation of the Programme is governed, to a great extent, by informal institutions which increases the discretional power of the actors involved in its implementation at all levels –central, territorial, political and community. Even when the financial resources are transferred directly to AECOs, the limitations faced by them to exercise their powers according to formal procedures potentially lead them to a relationship of dependency as regards other actors at the local level such as mayors, promoters, teachers or even an intermediary AECO. Thus, the authority for school management does not seem to be directly delegated to the community, but mainly mediated by the political representatives closer to that community. Understood in this way, PROHECO's institutional framework is favourable to the increase of the autonomy of both local political powers and communities in connection with school management. Since political authorities frequently have more resources, symbolic and material, this leads to the strengthening of the relative position of the local political power as regards both the national coordination of the Programme as well as the communities.

The dynamics of subordinating education management to the evolution of the political game could foster the improvement of education quality on the assumption that there is an effective social and democratic control. Nevertheless, the conditions for this to take place are uncommon in the region, particularly in socio-economic disadvantaged areas, where the population often has low educational levels and limited access to information and to decision-making channels. In PROHECO's case, what causes concern is that this apparent dynamics takes place with very high teacher rotation levels, precarious infrastructure and high dropout rates. Thus, it would be advisable to know to what extent the decentralization measures fostered by PROHECO's institutional character impact on the capacity of the state to ensure a quality education to all citizens.

3. The contribution of school grants to the efficiency of school management

- Despite the theoretical advantages of a management model based on community control, partial evidence of the operation of the Programme and actors' statements about the impact of PROHECO on the efficiency of school management do not allow the validation of the hypothesis that the Programme contributes to a more efficient school management.

Theoretically, the decentralization of funds would allow solving at least four of the problems posed by their allocation from a centralized body: first, the rigidities resulting from a uniform transfer from central bodies to sub-national units; second, the control of possible biases in the distribution of resources by sub-national entities to the communities; third, the possibility to readjust, with redistribution criteria, the budget allocation to the target populations; fourth, to reduce cost barriers[2].

In connection with rigidities in the allocation, it is pertinent to question to which extent PROHECO allows for greater flexibility in the allocation of resources. Four aspects can be proposed to give an answer.

Since PROHECO funnels the participation of communities in the detection of unmet education needs and grants them a role in the creation of schools, it seems to introduce a principle of flexibility in the allocation of resources because they detect and meet those education needs the central authorities could not otherwise have identified through the traditional channels.

Second, the formula to allocate resources to PROHECO schools contains as major component, the salary budget. This budget is calculated on the basis of one teacher for a minimum number of students. This does not seem to be different from the formula for the allocation of current expenses to regular rural schools. Although in such schools there is a distinction between grade-level teachers and teachers in managerial positions, this distinction does not exist at PROHECO. Although the formulas for allocation are similar, there is not a wide range for flexibility in their allocation as the bulk of the resources finally depend on the number of students.

2 De Mello e Souza, A (2003), *ob. cit.*

At this point, flexibility appears to provide another potential benefit: if the demand was satisfied or the local conditions were changed, should the service vary its characteristics or stop being offered, and be moved to another place? The qualitative study shows certain situations in which PROHECO schools had to reduce the number of teachers to adapt to decreases in the number of students enrolled. At the same time, there is evidence that shows that once the local conditions change, it is difficult to dismantle PROHECO's education supply to set up a regular education supply. In this case, it is important to clear up to what extent this fault is attributable to the "traditional" system, which does not take responsibility for the existing education supply once the context has changed - for example, when it ceases to be "rural".

The fourth potential benefit originated in the strong assumption of the disfunctionality of the payment system in regular schools is that AECOs directly control the payment of teacher salaries, and therefore, no salaries are paid to "ghost" teachers or teachers who do not perform their duties. However, the qualitative study shows some evidence indicating that under certain conditions, the system is pervious to the discretional trend of local authorities as regards payments. Also, it offers other mechanisms to deviate education funds to expenses other than the ones originally in the budget.

As to the possibility of biases in the allocation of resources to local communities by sub-national units, the study did not inquire about the existence of biases in the distribution of resources for the regular rural education, and therefore it is not possible to make a comparison. However, partial evidence suggests that there would be biases against PROHECO schools because the qualitative component suggests that supervision, training and teaching resources provided by sub-national education authorities would reach them to a lower extent than to regular rural schools.

As for the allocation of resources of the education budget to target communities, according to redistribution criteria, the information analysed has permitted to confirm a relatively higher presence of PROHECO in areas with lower human development rates. In this sense, it could be claimed that the Programme has contributed to funnel the investment to more disadvantaged areas. However, since the allocation is predominantly made up of salaries – and this allocation is lower than the official salary of a teacher in payroll- the

Programme itself introduces an obstacle to the elimination of discriminatory biases in the Honduran structure of education expenditure.

As regards the reduction of cost barriers, as explained below, PROHECO does not seem to reduce the costs of expansion of education infrastructure, but to partially transfer them from the central State to the local and community levels. Its worse school network quality could be understood as an indicator of the extent of barriers to attain the investment required.

PROHECO is based on the assumption that the control exercised by the community impacts positively on school management. The data gathered in the qualitative analysis confirm that the parents of students who attend PROHECO schools are satisfied with the quality of the service they receive. As positive traits of the Programme, they highlight the low levels of repetition, the compliance with school days, and the quality of the bond between students and teachers. Nevertheless, statistics do not allow validating the actors' statements in connection with the lower levels of repetition at PROHECO schools. Although this study has not analysed teacher absenteeism and student non-attendance, it is highly possible that the higher dropout rates observed at PROHECO schools counteract eventual efficiency increases resulting from higher attendance.

The same qualitative data challenge the supposed advantage of PROHECO at fostering a more efficient school management. This is observed in the statements about PROHECO's contribution to a more fluid relationship between school and community, which vary among the municipalities included in the sample. The power to control the teachers' work granted by the design of the Programme is seen as a positive factor in those municipalities where higher autonomy levels were found at AECOs, but as a source of tension between teachers and the community in the municipalities where AECOs seem to have a secondary role in the hiring of teachers. Thus, in the sample analysed, the Programme's results on the dimension of school management efficiency vary according to the AECOs' autonomy degree, punishing more disadvantaged communities.

In turn, when the statements of actors related to PROHECO's schools are confronted with those of the actors from regular schools, it is confirmed that the main differences are related to working conditions and teachers' degrees, the

Programme's schools receiving adverse ratings. Teachers, for their part, consider that the State's regulation mechanisms –such as visits from representatives of the District Office and participation in assessments– reach mostly regular schools.

Finally, the existence of different community participation instances in school life is highlighted. They are common to all establishments, such as Parents' Societies and Education Development Councils. Although the latter have not been broadly implemented, it is expected that their start-up will diminish the differential impact of the community's participation on school efficiency at PROHECO schools in comparison with regular schools.

Consequently, there is no sufficient evidence that allows asserting that PROHECO leads to an improvement in the efficiency of school management, as assumed in its foundation.

- PROHECO is an alternative to increase educational supply, at a lower cost, but it is not clear that it implies greater efficiency of the investment in education.

Even in the absence of information about the Programme's budget implementation, the information obtained at the interviews to officers at the central administration and the comparison of the characteristics of the regular rural schools with those of PROHECO, allow stating that the investment in education per student in the Programme is lower than the investment in regular rural schools.

Moreover, although both types of schools –PROHECO centres and regular rural schools- are rated in the middle of the scale measuring the quality of infrastructure, it is possible that the lower quality shown by PROHECO centres is related to the fact that the Programme does not subsidize the investment in infrastructure. From this standpoint, the Programme can be seen as a strategy from the the central government to delegate, fully or partially, the cost of the initial investment for expansion in areas not reached until then, some of them isolated and difficult to access. The communities incur in this cost by starting the educational services in houses or borrowed premises and managing resources, sometimes provided by the State itself– for example, the Honduran Fund for Social Investment (FHIS)- until they finally get their own premises.

The labour regulations for teachers, which delegate the hiring of teachers to AECOs, enable the Honduran State to pay lower remunerations and, at the same time, to curb the costs of transactions with teachers' labour unions which would presuppose salaries similar to those established in labour regulations in force for the regular system. Although it could be argued that a lower salary is justified by the fact that PROHECO was started with nonprofessional staff, due to the shortage of teachers in far away communities, the situation changed when new regulations were issued making it mandatory to hire staff with diplomas and fostering the professionalization of staff already hired.

However, the analysis of efficiency does not end with the comparison of the education expenditure of these two modalities. PROHECO's worse performance in retaining students should also be taken into account. It would be convenient to estimate the investment necessary for students to finish the first six grades of Basic School or, at least, to reach completion rates similar to those of the comparison group. Such estimate is beyond the scope of this study. It has not been possible either to compare PROHECO's performance in terms of students' learning achievements.

Research on these matters should show the items on which the resources allocated to the Programme are spent, discriminating those specifically related to education. The qualitative study carried out, shows that part of the resources transferred to AECOs as salaries never reach teachers' pockets due to the incidence of bank rates, travelling expenses to collect the checks, or the payment of commissions to intermediaries. The identification of the extent of such transaction costs would make it possible to estimate the inefficiency of the educational investment carried out under this service modality and, eventually, contribute to the design of alternatives to extend coverage and allow for more equitable conditions.

In turn, the analysis of transfers made from records handed in by PROHECO's team, shows inconsistencies that call attention to the efficiency of management procedures adopted by the Programme. The identification of the reasons for these shortfalls, could, on the one hand, ensure the transparency of PROHECO's management and, on the other hand, improve recording and control systems.

- PROHECO shows limitations similar to other forms of education analysed as far as free Basic Education is concerned.

The direct allocation that PROHECO makes to schools -through AECOs- does not relieve the families from facing costs for their children's schooling related to the maintenance of the schools' buildings. This situation is similar to that at regular rural schools in the neighbouring communities. In fact, the families' contributions to ensure schooling, whether in the form of materials or workmanship, are an integral part of current Honduran educational policy. In this connection, PROHECO does not differ from regular rural schools: none of these ensure free of charge access to the education system.

4. Reflections towards the promotion quality and equity in education

The conclusions of this study show PROHECO's significant contribution to extend the access to education in the Honduran rural areas in the last two decades. The creation and strengthening of the Programme has allowed the educational authorities to respond, although partially, to the education needs of the country's most disadvantaged areas. Throughout its existence, PROHECO has been an alternative and a quick response to communities excluded until that moment. The Programme's lower cost allowed the State to extend the scope of its action in a context of fiscal constraints. The Programme's flexibility to interpret and enforce its rules allowed the State to answer to the communities' emerging demands. The support to community management influenced the process of decentralization, giving families a key role in the regulation of school's activities, not from an individual point of view but from one rooted in community and local action.

Nevertheless, the study has also identified several aspects that compel us to think about the way to go about it. The extension of education supply has not been sufficient to ensure the universal coverage of Pre-Basic and Basic Education. PROHECO is also faced with the challenge of making its students successfully finish their studies instead of dropping out of school. Part of this challenge also implies the improvement of the conditions in which the teaching-learning process is carried out: qualified teaching staff with a

strong sense of institutional belonging, relevant teaching material and in sufficient number, adequate infrastructure, access to basic services, equipment, furniture and others. According to the results of this research, to meet this challenge is not only a matter of material resources –although the increase of the investment arises as a necessary condition for the required extension of the education supply but also to remedy the huge infrastructure's deficit found in rural schools and, particularly, in PROHECO schools. It is necessary to review PROHECO's theoretical foundations in the light of the social and political dynamics set up throughout its implementation.

For community actors to exercise an effective role in the regulation and control of the education service, they need technical and organizational abilities. The existence of this ability cannot be taken for granted, even less in areas characterized by high levels of illiteracy and relations of subordination to the economic and political powers. The empowerment of community social actors is not achieved by enacting a regulatory frame: it must be built from practice. As in any other learning process, it has advances and setbacks, and requires consistent interventions throughout time. Moreover, it is an intrinsically conflictive process because it alters pre-existing power relationships. Its complexity calls for an intersectoral approach, focused on an intervention on the territory but through different spheres of life: family planning, work relationships, production organization, social and legal protection and, of course, education. Specifically, from the education sector, it calls for the strengthening of the articulation of the different policies carried out in the territory. Actions in this line could target, for example, the inclusion of parents in literacy programmes, the interaction and exchange among communities served by different education projects, and the launching of accessible information and communication channels. The appearance of Municipal Councils for Education and Social Development seems to foster initiatives in that direction, but it would be advisable that the central levels of the educational system outline and plan strategies to reach the desired goal.

A review of the regulations also seems to be necessary, particularly those referred to the criterion of "proximity" between PROHECO and regular rural schools. This requires examining in greater depth the causes that have led to an important proportion of schools to be established at less than 3kms from another school, in opposition to the rules. The concept of "geographically

isolated rural area" does not refer, in practice, to a linear distance, but to difficulties in gaining access because of geographical features or other difficulties in traveling to the school. At the same time, it should be reevaluated if 3kms is a reasonable distance for the group age attending PROHECO schools, particularly younger children who travel on foot or riding animals. To develop a mixed criteria, not solely geographical, the "geographical isolation" dimension could also be put forward in relation to the communities' difficulties to gain access to transport circuits, consumption of goods and services, including public services other than education. These criteria could be developed with the participation of the communities served by PROHECO, as well as local political actors, all of which would contribute to their legitimacy. However, once established, their application has to be ensured, creating the maximum transparency for the decisions made by the Programme's coordination relating to the establishment of new education centres.

The study has also suggested that the fourfold attributes vested in the field staff, i.e., to control legitimacy, to supervise the administration, to train and provide advice, and to serve as a liaison with local education authorities, when combined with low community capacity could lead to abuse of formal powers, focusing using such powers to satisfy personal interest in the local political map. It would be advisable, therefore, to review these points. First step would be to ponder the possibility that some of these powers be exercised by decentralized agencies of the Ministry of Education, such as the District offices. This could possibly contribute to a greater integration of the PROHECO schools into the activities promoted by those instances. Also, the desired profile of the field staff could be more clearly defined as well as the conditions to get the job, possibly by establishing the incompatibility with other roles related to political parties and their dynamics. In turn, some instances could be proposed to control these professionals' performance of their duties. Another possible option to be analysed could be that PROHECO carries out systematic and regular evaluations, with the participation of AECOs' members, district authorities and applying performance indicators. The organization and cooperation among AECOs could be fostered, for example, under the figure of rotating councils regularly collecting information about the field staff's performance. At this point, a detailed analysis should be made of the material and symbolic restrictions to

this figure and the form to counteract them to avoid reproducing the weaknesses already detected at the AECOs.

As regards teacher recruitment, the study has shown that it seems to be influenced by political actors, at least in those cases in which AECOs recruit teachers from a short-list submitted by promoters or mayors. The setting up of a centralized database, ordered according to some criterion related to merit -for example, on the basis of credentials- would enable to control the possible political biases, and at the same time provide AECOs with objective information based on professional suitability to which they do not have access.

In connection with the retention of teachers, some incentive mechanisms that combine knowledge of the process to carry out performance reviews and professional development in specific aspects of rural education could be designed - such as multi-grade teaching techniques. Also, it would be advisable to examine the possibility that the experience of the Programme's teachers with outstanding performance be used to multiply their knowledge among junior or less experienced teachers, as a strategy forming part of a major project of continuous development. However, it must be borne in mind that the persistence of big salary disparities between teachers at PROHECO schools and teachers at regular schools tends to distort any type of incentive, reinforcing the idea that PROHECO is an attractive "first step" to later join the regular educational system.

In connection with the foregoing, it seems necessary to make a more detailed analysis of the reasons for teachers' permanence at schools in the Programme. This study did not examine the issue in greater depth, although working conditions could be one of the factors that account for this phenomenon, as well as other related to the Programme's perviousness to the party-political dynamics. However, other reasons added to the ones already listed could play a role to deepen it. For these reasons, a more detailed investigation on this phenomenon could give information on how to foster a greater permanence of teachers at each school, thus contributing to the consolidation of an institutional project based on more lasting ties between the teaching staff and the community. In turn, the equalization of working conditions of PROHECO teachers with those at the ordinary system would reduce the incentive of moving into that circuit. Some related measures are under study by Honduran educational authorities, such as the unionization of PROHECO

teachers, the creation of teaching scales, and a change in the current system of payments. Nevertheless, each of these measures faces various restrictions. Particularly, fiscal constraints are highlighted, in relation to the equalization of PROHECO teachers' salaries with those in the regular system. This could be an obstacle in the process of negotiating the inclusion of these workers into the unions representing teachers at the regular system; and although they can reach agreements in the short term, it could possibly originate conflicts in the future. The possibility of paying PROHECO teachers through the same mechanisms used to pay teachers at the regular system implies, in practical terms, the end of direct transfers to AECOs and could be understood as the end of the Programme. The arousal of resistance is to be expected in a great number of actors at the local and community level, with political consequences difficult to predict. Such a change should, therefore, be carefully informed and justified so that the positive image PROHECO has built, particularly with families served by the program, is not damaged.

The different components of the study have shown the insufficient training of AECO members and the lack of clarity about the Programme's regulations, added to the informal circulation of information about its operation. Considering, also, the possible redesign of the Programme and the ensuing redefinition of AECO competencies, it would be important to develop strategies that allow transmitting knowledge about PROHECO's rules through the successive generations of parents that enrol their children at the schools and join the AECOs. A systematic training action could bring in former AECO members or experienced current members who transmit, together with the Programme's rules and procedures, the know-how accumulated in their experience. The knowledge built by these actors about education service management should be systematized thus helping to improve the understanding of the scope and limits of community management models. Due to the time PROHECO has been set up and its rooting in the communities, a review of PROHECO's design and implementation would benefit from this community knowledge which is not yet systematized or available. Among other things, this would contribute to analyse other phenomena identified by this study, which have not yet been analysed, such as the high dropout rates among PROHECO's students.

There are a number of matters subject to further analysis and policy responses are urgent to allow for the continuity and advancement of the defence of

the right to quality education for all. Even with all its limitations, PROHECO has meant for many families their first access to the education system; in many cases it has broken with a family history of exclusion. However, such review should not bring about, under any circumstance, a setback. Nor should simple access to education be considered the final conquest of the universal right to education.

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This publication gathers the findings of the study carried out by IIPE/UNESCO Buenos Aires on the Honduran Programme for Community-Based Education (PROHECO), within the framework of the research programme "Financing for equity: developing an integral approach to finance educational equity".

The research carried out in 2014 highlights the degree of integration of the Programme with the national agenda on education policy and in the government and management structure of the Honduran education system. A mechanism is described by means of which the central government transfers the resources to the communities for supply funding purposes and proposes an approach to the analysis of the sufficiency and equity of these grants.

By analysing the way in which this policy was conceived, interpreted and implemented at schools by the different actors involved and in different contexts, the study seeks to demonstrate the results and limitations of this policy in the challenge to reliably ensure the universal right to a quality education for all.