

Decentralized Education and International Development

Why a community model is beneficial for human agency
and how it exemplifies education as development

Sarah McGhee

**Capstone Advisor: Professor Elizabeth Cohn
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Abstract

International development has historically classified education as a pathway to economic growth. While this has continually been recognized, there is a new paradigm of development, guided by Amartya Sen, that focuses on development as freedom-centered and agency-oriented. This new framework of development places education as a substantive human freedom, which can itself be development if instituted in a way that reflects the community's needs and enhances agency among its benefactors. This paper explores a decentralized model of education in rural Honduras as a way for education to move past being seen as solely a catalyst for economic growth and towards a model of development that recognizes the intrinsic qualities of education.

Introduction

International development's approach to poor people has evolved throughout the field's history. What began with a view of poor countries as "backwards" in both economic and social aspects instigated a global system that placed the West at the core and postcolonial countries at the periphery. The legacy of this system continues today as contemporary models of development strive to dismantle the system by creating a system in which peripheral countries can become self-sufficient. There are many common threads throughout these models, but based on the global structure inherent to each, aspects such as education are seen in different lights. This paper will look at different models to development and how each one views education in order to analyze the way it can best impact development. While most models agree that education is important due to its pathway towards economic development, this paper is more interested in the social impacts of education to development.

Education increases human capital, which promotes productivity, but what are the effects of education on development through a social lens? Education increases agency by giving children the tools to harness their human capital and become productive members of society. Not only does it provide children with academic learning, but it also surrounds them with ideas about their community, society, and the world as a whole. The way children are taught in the education system and the ideas, whether social, political, or academic, that are circulated in the classroom shape these worldviews. These children become an active part of society, instilled with these values, which are then circulated into the education system once again. This paper will analyze how each model of development uses education to perpetuate its ideology. Understanding that all development models recognize the economic impacts of education, this paper accepts that education promotes economic growth and will look further at the social ramifications of education on development. How has the education been used in the past to promote each development model and does it best promote agency among its benefactors? This paper will look at an alternative approach to education—a community model—and analyze its effects on agency and development.

The case study of rural Honduras will be used to analyze the community model. Economically, Honduras is one of the poorest countries in Latin America, with many workers in the country dependent upon fluctuating commodity prices and vulnerable to economic shocks. Extreme weather is an example of these shocks, which affect crops and infrastructure within the country. In 1998 Hurricane Mitch destroyed much of the infrastructure in the country, and as a result 100,000 children could not continue in school (Harwood, Lansdale, and Mull 2001, 17). In 1999, as a response to the devastation of Hurricane Mitch, the Honduran government instituted the Honduran Community Education Program, PROHECO in rural areas. It was

thought that PROHECO would provide education in the many areas where schools are not available and curb high rates of children not attending, leaving school after few years, inconsistent attendance, grade failures, and repetition that plague the schools that do exist. Today, the country is in a state of political instability after a June 2009 coup and many of these issues still exist. Education is a way to meet the society's needs, but it must accurately address the needs required by each community. A community model of education provides a format to tailor education to each case and its needs. This paper will explain how it does so and why this aspect of the community model promotes human agency and therefore, education as development.

Literature Review: Education in International Development

As international development models have evolved, the relationship between the core and the periphery has been viewed differently in each model. Alan Rogers provides convenient labels for the categorizations of these relationships, which he calls the deficit, disadvantage, and difference paradigms of development. As the approach to viewing the relationship between core and periphery changes, the way education is approached also differs. The classical view of education is as a primary tool for economic development, meaning that it fits into the models of development that focus on producing as much capital as possible in the periphery for export to the core. However, a more recent model of development, which will be explored in this paper, demonstrates education as not only a means for economic development but also constitutes development itself.

The idea that education leads to economic development is an underlying premise of all development models. This principle "has been a fundamental tenet of development strategy for

at least 40 years” (Pritchett 2001, 368). Literacy and education increases human capital on an individual level, which in turn enhances productivity, technology, and process capabilities and therefore output produced economy-wide (Hanushek and Wößmann 2007, 3). The greater the school attainment, the greater the economic growth rate; however, quality must also be included in the analysis (Hanushek and Wößmann 2007, 4). Quality of education and attainment should be measured and considered on a country-by-country and region-by-region analysis to account for differences in educational systems, government policies, culture, environment, etc. The effects of education on economic development are case-specific, but there is a general positive correlation. In addition, education also improves access to health care, women empowerment, and gender equality. This approach to education as a means to human development and ultimately, that education is development in and of itself will be explored further alongside its role in economic development by analyzing the different models of development.

The deficit framework, which has been predominant in international development since the early 1950s, has concentrated on the Western industrialized countries as a model that the “underdeveloped” countries should strive to replicate (Rogers 2005, 19). At first, poor countries were encouraged to move away from “traditional” ideas and towards a modern, urban, technology-based, and industrialized society (Rogers 2005, 20). Then, incorporated into this needs-based approach was a focus on bettering the lives of the poor through integrated rural development that provided basic social services such as education, health care, and nutrition; similar to this transition, there has most recently been a focus on poverty eradication (Rogers 2005, 21-23). Also incorporated within the deficit paradigm is the concentration on neoliberal reforms, or more specifically, a focus on free markets, privatization, and accumulation of capital (Rogers 2005, 22). While these approaches to development have varied, Rogers groups them

into the larger deficit paradigm, since these ideas are all Western-driven. “Developing” countries are given the role of the “Third World” or the “periphery” and the task of supplying the “First World,” or the “core,” with resources and manufactures.

In this model of development, education is seen as a way of “bettering” the poor and a way through which those in developing countries can become modern members of the global society under the First World’s terms. Integrated rural development provided education as well as other basic services, the incentives of which are based on the idea that a better educated and healthy constituency would be able to transfer more resources to the core. Modernization theory is an example of the deficit paradigm. As part of this theory, Rostow’s stages of growth predicted that societies go through stages of development including traditional, preconditions for takeoff, takeoff, takeoff, maturity, and high mass consumption (Peet and Hartwick 1999, 82). This system implied that “traditional societies wishing to develop need only copy the already-proven example of the West, while generous Western governments should send armies of modernizers...to the benighted people of the Third World awaiting the rational spark of business-oriented thinking” (Peet and Hartwick 1999, 83).

An example of this West-centered model is the formation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) and the educational policies it instituted from its creation in 1957 to the U.S. withdrawal in 1984. The organization originally pushed for the creation of “national educational systems and plans” (Mundy 1998, 457). The United States, one of the largest stakeholders in the United Nations and primary funder of UNESCO, saw potential in these systems to integrate “postcolonial nations into the Western world order” (Mundy 1998, 457). This Western world order involved industrializing and modernizing the Third World so as to maintain the system of transferring resources from the

periphery to the core. This included the development of education systems focused on technical skills that would benefit “economic modernization” (Mundy 1998, 457). This model provided the United States with the tools to shape the developing world into a resource center of industry and goods to be shipped to the core. This status quo of resource transfer, the basis of the deficit framework, gave the United States assurance that communism would not spread into its world order, a primary concern for the United States at this time.

Not only does UNESCO fit into the deficit framework based on the reasoning behind its policies but also based on the policies themselves. UNESCO used Western models for education as a basis for defining problems in education elsewhere in the world (Mundy 1998, 460). This shows the entrenched effect that the West has had on education within international development. The West-centered model exemplifies the deficit framework of development, the idea in which the West is the model to replicate and the periphery is a backwards sector that needs to modernize. Although the United States withdrew from UNESCO in 1984, its presence and actions had set a precedent for education in international development—one focused on economic modernization. This has continued through the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and World Bank’s roles based around this same idea of education for increased economic productivity.

The second paradigm of disadvantage was developed in response to the deficit framework and argued that the inherent structure of the “First” versus the “Third World” led to a system of dependency. Scholars under this framework argue that the core, or the West, marginalizes the periphery in a system of “continuous transfer” of resources from the periphery leaving them in a state of “underdevelopment.” They argue that the only way to halt this dependency is by becoming self-reliant. They also argued that “dependency is not simply

economic; it is in fact just as much or even more cultural, needing (as Friere put it) ‘cultural action’ to break it” (Rogers 2005, 25). In an effort to become self-reliant, many countries attempted import substitution industrialization. Although this oftentimes resulted in financial crises, the idea that dependency is not solely economic but largely cultural as well is supported by the broadening hegemony of the United States and Western ideas throughout the world.

Theories within the disadvantage framework include that of dependency theory and World Systems Theory. These are based on the idea that the colonial system geared developing countries “toward demands from the center, even when the export economy was locally owned” (Peet and Hartwick 1999, 107). Ander Gunder Frank argued that traditionalism, which the West states is the reason for underdevelopment according to theories under the deficit paradigm, is not the contributing factor to underdevelopment but that the capitalist system defined by the West is the problem for the developing world. The periphery is specifically dependent on the core as the buyer of its resources. World Systems Theory, developed by Immanuel Wallerstein, also categorized the world as “a social entity with a single division of labor so that all sectors or areas were dependent on the others via interchanges of essential goods” (Peet and Hartwick 1999, 112). Within the system there are core, semiperiphery, and periphery economic zones through which the capitalist world economy operates. Inherent to the system, the core states extract surplus from the peripheral states to accumulate capital, while the periphery is dependent on the core to buy their raw materials, primarily agricultural products.

In these theories, the periphery is dependent on the core as a market for its goods but also for financial and social aid, including educational assistance, which causes dependency. The “educational participation of ‘core’ states in ‘periphery’ states’ global struggle for power and resources” can “ultimately [return] capital to the core” through increased productivity and the

creation of more resources (Clayton 1998, 479). The people subjected to this system respond to the core's influence on education through "overt resistance, everyday resistance, quietly subversive-politically progressive resistance, collaboration, conversion, and pragmatic acceptance" (Clayton 1998, 494-496). These forms of resistance, although most are not overt reactions, by those in the periphery to the core's intervention in the periphery's education systems suggest that these people are looking for an alternative form of education that excludes the core's influence. An agency-oriented movement for an alternative and more equal system is a way for the periphery to establish a self-reliant system of education, breaking the dependency caused by the core's influence. This idea of agency-oriented development will be explored further under the difference paradigm.

Antonio Gramsci's idea of ideological hegemony, based on Marxist ideas, also exemplifies the disadvantage framework. He described "ideological hegemony" as a system in which "civil institutions inculcated an entire system of values, beliefs, and morality supportive of the established order and its dominating classes" (Peet and Hartwick 1999, 115). Educational institutions can be considered within the realm of these civil institutions, as school is a place where children are surrounded and shaped by new ideas. However, controversy comes into play when the education system begins to imbue a belief and value system that was not organically developed in the region. Ideological hegemony can be seen in education when cultural ideas and understandings from the core are transmitted to schools in the periphery through core-based books and classroom materials and interactions with core teachers, teaching styles, and bureaucratic systems (Clayton 1998, 485). This embeds "particular ways of thinking in the periphery—about political and economic systems, on one hand, and cultural practices, on the

other” (Clayton 1998, 486). This demonstrates the disadvantage framework through a transfer of capital from the periphery to the core, but in the form of cultural capital rather than physical.

The idea of ideological hegemony is not only applicable to the core and the periphery but also to the periphery of the periphery, or the rural poor of a country traditionally described as being in the periphery within the Worlds Systems Theory. As a peripheral country supplies raw materials to the core for production, oftentimes rural areas are similarly used for extraction. Agriculture would be the prime example of this condition as it is often cultivated in the rural areas for shipment to the cities or abroad. In countries such as Honduras with a rural population that is cut off from many of the resources available in the cities, national policies made in the cities may not adequately address the needs of those in rural areas. Ideological hegemony of the national government over the rural population can exist in education much like it does in a peripheral country from a core country. Since those in rural areas are dependent on the national government for funding much like a peripheral country is dependent on a core country for educational assistance, cultural capital may be transferred to the city, particularly if rural to urban migration is involved.

Rogers’s third framework, the paradigm of difference, describes a relatively new model of development that encompasses the idea of agency and emphasizes participatory development. In the disadvantage framework, “access to education is not simply a matter of the lack of motivation of the poor” as it was under the deficit paradigm, “but rather a matter of the exclusion of the poor through barriers which the providers of education have erected” (Rogers 2005, 25). The difference framework seeks to work around this exclusion by forming an autonomous, self-determined development process. This is different from the disadvantage, because it is the use of a self-determined process rather than just nonproductive forms of resistance. It builds a dialogue

of diversity rather than difference and proposes a “Third Way” so that “people can and often do act in their own development, but that these people define development in terms which are frequently different from those of the major aid and development agencies” (Rogers 2005, 28). This construct builds upon a society’s culture in that the community as a whole becomes the driving force of development in the way it feels best suits and benefits those within the society.

The “Third Way” to development is a means to breaking the ideological ties between the core and the periphery, which is characteristic of the disadvantage framework of development. Rogers states that,

Equally the disadvantaged discourses see education as a tool of development rather than as a goal of development—education for economic and social transformation. The Dependency Theory concentrates on vocational education and training to build up local economic capacity for self-reliance, while the social transformation approach focuses on alternative education and non-formal education. Universal Basic Education (UBE) has to some extent replaced Universal Primary Education (UPE). The difference paradigm however sees education in terms of the diversity or provision, of multi-cultural and inter-cultural education, of the involvement of civil society in education, especially community schools, an education free-for-all. (Rogers 2005, 34)

Models of development that are situated within the difference framework view education as an end goal rather than solely a means to an end.

Amartya Sen’s argument in his book *Development as Freedom* falls under the difference framework as he argues that development is freedom-centered and agent-oriented (Sen 1999, 11). He proposes that “if freedom is what development advances, then there is a major argument

for concentrating on that overarching objective, rather than on some particular means, or some specially chosen list of instruments” (Sen 1999, 3). The five different types of freedom include political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security (Sen 1999, 10). Basic education is a social opportunity and substantive freedom that is important to both the means and the ends to development, since “with adequate social opportunities, individuals can effectively shape their own destiny and help each other. They need not be seen primarily as passive recipients of the benefits of cunning development programs” (Sen 1999, 11). This idea that the poor are excluded from social opportunities and other freedoms by the core is the basis of the difference paradigm. For the poor to have adequate access to these freedoms, such as education, and the agency to ensure that it meets their needs, qualifies as development according to the freedom-centered and agency-oriented approach.

This paper will look at how a community model of education can supply these freedoms in an efficient way and promote agency so that education can be seen as development. The paper begins by looking at the obstacles to obtaining the freedom of education and then analyzes how the community model of education can adequately address these obstacles. It will also describe how the community model builds agency to education’s benefactors—not only the children but also the parents and the community in which it is established. It will explain how the community based education is a reflection of the freedom-centered and agency-oriented model, and therefore can be constituted as development and not simply a means to economic growth.

Obstacles to Effective Education

Education is not only a means to economic development, but its intrinsic value as a social freedom identifies it as an end to development as well. Sen argues that “...economic growth

cannot sensibly be treated as an end in itself. Development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy” (Sen 1999, 14). Looking at the freedom of education as development and not simply as a path to development shows that obstacles are not only those that prevent education but also those that impede effective and quality education. These obstacles include child labor as an impediment to attending school and Western ideological hegemony’s presence in the system, marginalizing those involved within it. If the idea of education as development is embraced, it can transition the development framework in developing countries towards the difference paradigm. Consequently, the rural poor can move beyond the disadvantage framework, in which people are unable to break from a system of dependency on the West due to an ideological monopoly.

Child Labor

Child labor and education have often been seen as two sides of the same coin: when a child is working he or she is not in school, and if a child is in school then he or she will not be in the work world and will obtain a better job and live a better life after receiving an education. This framework of education and work regards child labor as an obstacle to efficient schooling. However, the concept of childhood that shapes the child labor versus education discourse is often based upon a Western idea of childhood. Since “our understanding of childhood will determine how we think of the relationship of children and work, and hence, how we perceive of child labour,” a Western idea of childhood fosters the idea that child labor is inherently bad (Nizan 2004, 138). This reflects the deficit paradigm in that it is a West-centered model, which is pushed on developing countries so that they will “modernize”. For example, the Convention of the Rights of the Child defines a child as a human being less than 18 years of age, but “chronological age alone is not sufficient to define the concept of *child*” (Nizan 2004, 139). In

much of the Global South, children are required to work to support their families, whereas Western views of children involve playtime, schooling, and a distinct separation between childhood and adulthood with work categorized as an “adult activity” (Nizan 2004, 139-140). Therefore, the concept of a flexible definition of childhood and acceptable norms related to education and child labor may differ from country to country and region to region. Understanding this will allow developing countries to move away from the deficit paradigm towards the difference framework, in which they can define their own standards of childhood, child labor, and education.

The historic and cultural nature of child labor in agricultural work is entwined with a lack of continuous education, thus an obstacle. In Honduras, “between 69 and 75 per cent of children working in construction, agriculture, and the service sector do not attend school” and working instead of pursuing education is a result of cultural factors as well as poverty (Groves 2004, 172). A parent’s decision whether to send their children to school and how often is based on the opportunity cost of sending the child to school. Since these children and their families have low incomes, “the economic contribution of children to families in developing countries (especially in rural areas) and accordingly the opportunity cost associated with school attendance may be substantial” (Bedi and Marshall 2002, 130). Children’s labor tasks vary; for example, in the coffee sector, a child’s economic contribution can consist of directly tending to the coffee plants for tasks such as weeding and harvesting or can also indicate the need of the child to stay at home with younger children while the parents and older children are working with the coffee. This is not only an economic reason but also a cultural one—among the large number of households headed by the mother, the eldest son is expected to take the role of primary income provider while the eldest daughter often provides household work as well as income generating

work (Groves 2004, 172). In addition, work is seen in Honduras as a crucial part of growing up and is often reflected in the common phrase, “Yo me crié trabajando,” meaning “I grew up working” (Groves 2004, 172).

Child labor may completely take the place of education, but it is more likely that children will instead be absent from school during the most labor intensive times of the harvest season. Parents sending children to school may depend on the amount of work needed to be achieved on a particular day, indicating daily decisions about sending children to school, or it could be a seasonal decision resulting in temporary withdrawal during harvest time (Bedi and Marshall 2002, 132). However, exams are often scheduled during the peak cultivation period causing children who have withdrawn in order to harvest to miss their exams and fail for the year (Groves 2004, 172). Parental decision-making regarding children’s schooling can also be a cyclical phenomenon as well as a daily cost-benefit judgment. Children whose parents have lower levels of education are linked with a higher probability of grade failure (Marshall 2003, 592). As children forego schooling to work and earn money for their families, they reduce future possibilities for income and are more likely to keep their children at home to work on the farm rather than go to school as well. Some parents in Honduras send their children to school early due to a lack of preschools; while this may seem encouraging, these children often repeat the first year of school and are therefore likely to carry the stigma of repetition with them throughout their schooling years, which are often cut short as a result (Marshall 2003, 594, 597). In the case of sporadic education, child labor is not a complete obstacle to education but an obstacle to an effective education, threatening the idea that this freedom is development.

There is a historical significance of child labor in economic development. Although, there are three differences between child labor of the industrial revolution and of today: children

today are largely working in the informal sector; new and extremely dangerous forms of child labor such as pornography, prostitution, and child soldiers have developed; and today there are international conventions restricting child labor (Tuttle 2006, 150). These international agreements include the conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO) 138 and 182. ILO Convention 138: Minimum Age for Admission to Employment was ratified by Honduras in 1980, and it ratified ILO Convention 182: Worst Forms of Child Labor in 2001 (Tuttle 2006, 150-151). Honduras has not only ratified these conventions, but education is also free and compulsory for ages five through 13 and the legal minimum working age is 16 (Tuttle 2006, 151). While these are the legal guidelines for education and work for children in Honduras, they are not enforced and are therefore not effective. Sanctions for defying these laws are minimal and that even if children attend school, “in poor and rural areas [they] are overcrowded and of low quality” (Tuttle 2006, 151).

While child labor is still prevalent even with these laws and ratified conventions, some argue that they are too harsh. For example, Bourdillon, White, and Myers argue that ILO Convention 138, which requires a minimum age for employment, is unjustified and that it along with laws enforcing it “neither protect children adequately nor promote their education” (2009, 107). While agreeing with ILO Convention 182, calling for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor that are particularly dangerous to children, they counter several arguments for ILO Convention 138 (Bourdillon et al. 2009, 107). Children often work to supplement the family income and their work is sometimes dangerous or takes away the ability to go to school, but this is not characteristic of all work undertaken by children, and child labor does not inherently perpetuate poverty (Bourdillon et al. 2009, 109). There is also an ongoing debate between schooling and child labor as mutually competitive and schooling is not necessarily prevented by

children working but rather it is a third factor such as poverty that causes both the lack of schooling and child labor (Bourdillon et al. 2009, 110-111). These conventions perpetuate the idea of a Western view on child labor and education. Further, the unresponsiveness of Honduran families and authorities to these laws suggests that child labor is necessary for these poor, rural families. Unless the education system works around child labor, which will occur inevitably, these children may not receive an adequate education.

There are three reasons why children in Honduras work: poverty, culture, and education (Harwood, Lansdale, and Mull 2001, 15). Natural disasters, such as Hurricane Mitch, poor education as a result of shortage of schools, and lack of leadership in the national government are primary causes of the poverty within the country (Harwood et al. 2001, 15). As discussed before, there is a cultural aspect of children working to support their families' incomes; oftentimes parents want their children to go to school, but they also rely on their financial support (Harwood et al. 2001, 16). Finally, children work because schools are inaccessible due to the expense of transportation both in currency and in regards to opportunity cost (Harwood et al. 2001, 18). Some parents feel that what is being taught in school, such as physical education, science, and the influence from cultures of other countries is not of great value to the children or their lives (Harwood et al. 2001, 18). This is an example of the impact of foreign influences on education in the country and exemplifies ideological hegemony as an imposition of core state ideas and values on the periphery, identifiable in the disadvantage framework of development. If child labor is necessary, as it has been shown to be in much of rural Honduras, education needs to be flexible so as to work around the necessity of children's added income to the family and minimize the opportunity cost of going to school.

Western Ideological Hegemony

The Western view of childhood and preconceived idea of education is an example of ideological hegemony. As a particular example, the Western view of childhood infiltrates the education system. In Honduras, primary education is often thought of as five or six separate grades with different teachers for each grade, as is customarily associated with Western education systems. However, in many rural areas this is often not feasible. Not only is the system representative of the Western ideas of a school but courses taught diminish the role and impact of local ideas. Many elementary schools in rural Honduras have lessons that are constructed based on Western materials. Regarding environmental education, most information taught is U.S.-based and consequently addresses wildlife and environmental issues that affect the United States (Ham and Castillo 1990, 27-28). Even if the material itself is translated, it conveys Western ideas rather than educating the people about their personal surroundings and the issues affecting their personal environment, such as deforestation (Ham and Castillo 1990, 28). Honduran children can often recognize and identify pictures of African and North American wildlife while knowing little about the wildlife that exists around them, since most of the books and posters they have that depict wildlife are sent from abroad (Ham and Castillo 1990, 28).

More broadly, models of education are largely shaped off of Western ideas. While these may work well in a Western-designed education system, they reflect a Western concept of childhood. It needs to be understood that the concept of what it means to be a child is unique for and dependent on the specific culture. Therefore, the definition of a “child” may vary drastically depending on the context. If the specific needs of the community in regards to childhood and child labor are not adequately reflected as it pertains to the individual society and context, the education system will not benefit those involved. This reflects the disadvantage paradigm—

although those involved may resist to the idea of a Western-based model, they are stuck in a system of dependency on those who designed it. In the case of Honduras, this would be the central government's Ministry of Education. An education system that is individually evaluated and designed and gives the children and families who utilize it a voice and the agency to speak out for attention to the community's needs and values will shift the development model to that of the difference framework. Consequently, the education system will guarantee the freedom of social opportunity and constitute development.

Both the context of child labor and lessons taught in schools are unique situations within each individual country, region, and condition. An educational model within the difference framework will ensure that policies are not based on the Western idea of childhood and schooling but rather adapt to the culture and reflect what is best for children in the community. If child labor is imperative for family income and even survival, enforcing a minimum age law will not benefit but rather hurt children. Incorporating education and work together in the system, as long as the work done by children is not detrimental to their health or safety, greatly benefits both the children and their families. An educational model that is organized and directed by the community is most likely to take into account the situation of the families within the society and determine a more accessible form of schooling.

Reconciling the Tension between Local Culture and Ideological Hegemony: Alternative Models of Education

There is a fine line between globalization as a natural progression towards technology and international trade and as a prime example of Western ideological hegemony; yet this line is bitterly defined by the two opposing sides. If the rural poor in Honduras are learning English

and the use of computers, is it a result of a neo-imperialistic agenda by the United States or an investment in a future destined to be synonymous with technology and English as the global business language? Directed under the national government, often funded by international donors, and attended by local children who are increasingly surrounded by the culture of the United States, the education system is where Western ideology and local culture clash.

Education systems can be seen as a source of change while retaining cultural heritage:

Educational systems are, at their best, the creation of the societies whose needs and desires they serve...it is postulated that educational systems can only be understood as they are viewed against the background of their contemporary social and cultural environment. The task of these systems is in great part to preserve and transmit the elements of permanent value found in the cultural heritage of the past. Yet it is as important for them to discard the obsolete as to add the timely; and they must so discard the obsolete as not to lose contact with that which has perennial worth. If the systems fail to do this transmitting, discarding, and adding in such a way that they adapt themselves to the emerging needs and interests of the men of their day, they become obsolete and then soon decay. Thus societies must find leaders of vision and initiative who are abreast or even ahead of their times, and through them found educational systems of a new character which comply with contemporary interests and needs. (Cummings 1973, 9)

Schools should be a reflection of what society feels is best for its members in the present time period. The system should be an ongoing adaptation to the changing environment and elements of the society's culture. This is embedded in the idea that culture, economy, and schooling are related and interconnected.

Culture, economy, and schooling are mutually dependent in rural Honduras through the agricultural system at play, how that influences the education system, and the relationships that result between social and cultural norms. The structuralists, who focused on the idea that schools enforced social class differentiation, and the culturalists, who saw that the production of culture occurs through interactions, such as in schools, failed to see the complexities and connections in their arguments (Weis 1996, xi). There is a cyclical relationship between social class created from economic structure, in this case a region largely reliant on agricultural production, and how that status is portrayed through social institutions, such as schools (Weis 1996, xi). Consequently, these institutions, in addition to a person's place in the economy, help to form culture and identity (Weis 1996, xi). The relationship between culture and society is a mutual one that both shapes education and is played out through schooling.

In a society that is commodity based and dependent on agricultural production, such as rural Honduras, economic status is embedded within education. In communities that rely on child labor as part of the economic structure, a school that points out differences in social standing among classes can harm students. As was explained previously, once there is a stigma of being absent during school, failing, or repeating, many students drop out rather than continue in this environment. This idea is perpetuated in Western-based schools, which have different age-appropriate levels of schooling. By not continuing forward in the educational process or taking longer than average to complete a set stage of schooling, there is an added stigma to that child "falling behind" in school. The lack of student, parental, and community participation within the school also contributes to this. Since "agency is not enacted without reference to social structure (of which the school is only one part)," participants who do not have a say in the decision-making process are more likely to view school as a "structure" of the government, in

which they have little to no influence (Weis 1996, xi). By viewing the system as an institution it is less likely that participants will fight against the stigma and continue through the process at a “lower level” than the others and more likely that they will drop out.

Some recent education reforms in developing countries have taken a different approach to education in hopes of correcting for this stigma. An approach that is becoming more utilized is that of decentralizing leadership within the system while ensuring that the leaders are held accountable for the services provided. Entrusting a large portion of the responsibility associated with the education system, and the students that are a part of it, to the community has been an attempt to increase accountability and therefore, the success of education systems. In order “for governments to better address these problems there is a need to create an institutional framework in which the key actors involved in service provision are made accountable to play their roles within the system” (Meade and Gershberg 2008, 299). Some emphasize the government’s role and need for accountability (Meade and Gershberg 2008, 299). However, decentralization within education systems in Latin America, as well as Honduras specifically, has lately moved towards more community involvement as a complement to government support.

Accountability within a school setting is set within the principal-agent theory: “a dominant economic theory concerning how principals, such as employers, design compensation structures to get agents, such as employees, to work in the principals’ interest” (Umansky 2005, 22). Not only is the principal-agent theory applicable to principals and employees but also among students, parents, and teachers. Since education in rural areas, such as those in Honduras, is largely based on the opportunity cost of sending a child to school versus employing the child with other tasks, parents must receive substantial compensation their child’s time in school. While in the majority of cases this does not substantiate a form of monetary payment, parents are

“paid” in a sense by the human development of their children and the probability of the child’s higher future income.

The Educational Quality Improvement Program 2 (EQUIP2) conducted research on complementary and alternative forms of education and their contribution to the Education for All movement. These programs, which are conducted in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Mali, and Zambia, represent different complementary models of education that are not meant to replace the public education system but rather to supplement the existing system by offering education to students who otherwise do not benefit or are unable to access education (Collins and Gillies 2007, 1). They range from community schools, home-based schools, and schools for adults who did not complete primary school. In most cases, they seek to condense learning objectives from the public schools into a smaller time frame. On average, these alternatives are more cost-effective and higher learning outcomes are achieved relative to public schools (Collins and Gillies 2007, 2). However, these programs are not sufficient as a permanent system as they only provide already disadvantaged students with a minimum quality of education (Collins and Gillies 2007, 15).

Although these alternative models are incomplete and insufficient for the long run, there are several benefits of a community model of education. Many of these benefits revolve around the idea that it is community-based and therefore, all actors that participate in the system are more invested. The schools are created by the community and therefore are ensured to be in an accessible location. The decentralized management structure ensures that decisions regarding teachers, salaries, and schedules best fit the community, that local and regional issues are brought to the attention of the students via a locally produced curriculum, and that local teachers supported by the community grants an added degree of security that the teacher will attend and

be held accountable for his or her classroom (Collins and Gillies 2007, 7). In addition, involving parents in the decision-making process of hiring a teacher so that they have a say in hiring an authority in the community, gives them a sense of empowerment, especially in cases where they may not have a high level of education themselves (Ahern, 2010).

Involving parents and communities in the education process is part of the transition towards a development model based on the difference framework. This move shifts from the deficit framework, in which education programs imply that they are providing benevolent aid to families who are otherwise unable to develop the education services that are being implemented. It also moves beyond the disadvantage paradigm that creates a sense of dependency among the community on the education services being provided for them. Under this framework, parents and the community have no say in the decision-making process, stripping the community of agency to dictate its own development. With a decentralized model of education, the community is able to take an active part in designing an education system with teachers that best reflect the needs of the families it serves. The next section of this paper will look at PROHECO further and compare it to the Zapatista model of autonomous education in Mexico in order to analyze ways it can be improved so as to best represent a development model reflective of the agency in the community. By taking the community model and applying it to a difference framework that focuses on the participation and involvement of civil society, the educational system can be transformed from a tool of development brought upon the community by outsiders to the freedom of education as an end of development itself, argued for by Amartya Sen.

PROHECO

Honduras's rural education program, PROHECO (Programa Hondureño de Educación Comunitaria, or Honduran Community Education Program) seeks to reach out to rural poor children whose education is impeded upon by the obstacles described earlier in this paper. Started in March of 1999, PROHECO was founded based on the EDUCO (Educación con Participación de la Comunidad, or Education with Community Participation) model in El Salvador, which evolved after isolated communities successfully led their own education programs during the civil war (Sawada and Ragatz 2005, 257). At its beginning, PROHECO targeted villages affected by Hurricane Mitch and sought to provide education for those in rural and isolated areas and to increase community participation in the decision-making process regarding teachers and teacher salaries (Pavon 2008, 200). A school board, entitled the ACE (Asociación Comunal para la Educación or Community Education Association), is elected by the parents of all students and then manages the teacher hiring process and resource allocation (Sawada and Ragatz 2005, 258). By 2005, 10 percent of primary school enrollment in Honduras was through a PROHECO school (Pavon 2008, 200). In addition, since teachers were hired by the community school boards and not part of a union, PROHECO schools stayed open through national teacher strikes (Pavon 2008, 200). This is true today as well; after the June 2009 coup, many teachers have protested the new government. While this delays education in the cities of San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, many teachers in rural areas continue to teach (Ahern, 2010).

The effectiveness of PROHECO schools in regards to student achievement scores has been questioned, since teachers in this program often have less experience. In one empirical study comparing PROHECO schools to non-PROHECO schools under similar conditions, it was found that PROHECO schools are poorer than the non-PROHECO control group, although both

were located in rural regions to ensure adequate compatibility for the analysis (Di Gropello and Marshall 2009, 7). However, students in PROHECO schools score higher on standardized achievement tests (Di Gropello and Marshall 2009, 7). PROHECO schools also show that they are a better environment for the students, indicated by less fights in school, and are more efficient as teachers spend more time teaching and less time in administrative duties than their non-PROHECO counterparts (Di Gropello and Marshall 2009, 7). There is also much more parental participation in PROHECO schools, which led to higher student achievement in Spanish and Science, although not in Mathematics due to less educated parents on average (2009, 14). The greatest drawbacks for PROHECO schools come from lower teacher qualifications, and there is a “more frequent use of teachers that did not graduate from normal schools” for teachers, which means lower capacity for these schools (Di Gropello and Marshall 2009, 14). Despite lower levels of formal education, these teachers often spend more time with the students in instruction-based activities, attend school regularly and more often than non-PROHECO teachers, and enable more parent-teacher communication (Di Gropello and Marshall 2009, 14-15).

This analysis, which focuses on effectiveness of the community model on student achievement and performance, shows that PROHECO schools can be just as efficient, if not more so, than non-PROHECO schools in Honduras. However, it is important to note that while student achievement may be slightly better, PROHECO schools offer qualitative benefits that the control group sees less of, including greater individual attention from teacher to student and more communication between parents and teachers as well as greater camaraderie between the students as is indicated by less fighting. Significance can also be found in the authors’ difficulty finding adequate non-PROHECO schools for a control group. They state that “it was not easy to

exactly match PROHECO schools with rural counterparts because the program sometimes reaches the most isolated communities” (Di Gropello and Marshall 2009, 5). This means that PROHECO has successfully accomplished one of its largest goals in instituting the program—to reach the poorest rural poor. Regardless of differences in school achievement or teacher capacity, it is important to recognize that children in the rural and isolated regions which PROHECO caters to are able to attend school. This opportunity versus not having access to a school if PROHECO was not enacted outweighs the miniscule differences that Di Gropello and Marshall point out.

Despite the availability of schools where they may not have been present before, the PROHECO community model is not immune to the political environment. In recent years the model has seen problems in accountability as political issues make their way into the groundwork of the system. In June of 2010 there were reports that the current administration of President Porfirio Lobo Sosa, who was elected after a coup ousting President Manuel Zelaya in June 2009, has “replaced all of PROHECO’s field staff and tried to force out teachers hired under the previous administration” to replace them with those supporting the National Party, of which Lobo is a member (Altschuler 2010). This form of clientelism is not unique to the new, controversial administration but has been a part of PROHECO since 2006 when there was a change in the ruling party (Altschuler 2010). In addition, “voters in remote rural areas, where PROHECO schools are concentrated, are even more susceptible to these clientelistic strategies,” since politicians vie for their votes with promises of material benefits (Altschuler 2010).

This demonstrates the use of the school system as an institution created by the national government to instill nationalist values and represents ideological hegemony. By requiring that some teachers step down, others be put into place, and signatures required at banks to change

hands, the government authorities in charge of PROHECO are taking over the capabilities that the Community Education Associations are suppose to have under the program (El Heraldito 2010). Rather than demonstrating ideological hegemony from the core to the periphery, this demonstrates the rural areas of Honduras as part of the periphery of the periphery. The hegemony demonstrated by the Honduran government implements its ideas through its implanted activists into the educational structure. The people in these rural areas vote for its leaders in reaction to promises from the politicians (Altschuler 2010). This is a natural reaction to the economic situation in rural Honduras and identifies the tension between the local political culture of clientelism and ideological hegemony, which poses an obstacle to education as development in that it restrains the freedoms that Amartya Sen argues are essential to, and are themselves, development.

The Zapatistas

The Zapatistas take a different approach to the hegemony demonstrated by the Mexican government. The Zapatista indigenous group in the state of Chiapas, Mexico has created an autonomous school system outside of the government system in response to being discriminated against in the traditional government schools. Starting in 2007, Zapatistas around Mexico began implementing an education system they call the Other Education (Howard 2007). Their goal is to “teach the youth the history, language and culture of the people, and educate them to provide for their community, something that the government was never able to do” (Howard 2007). In their schools they teach in their native languages, students wear traditional dress, and they are taught by promoters, who generally come from the same community in which they teach (Davies 2010). The students not only learn mathematics, their local language, Spanish, and History, but they also learn more practical skills that are of use to the community such as agro-ecology and

how to take care of the land (Howard 2007). This is a way to retain and pass down the traditions and community values from generation to generation.

The system provides for the transmission of culture from one generation to the next in the context of the Zapatistas as a whole, but each Caracol, or center within the Zapatista-formed government, adapts the system to their individual community and its needs. Locations of schools, number of school hours per day, the number and separation of grade levels, and breaks for helping with the coffee harvest or in the community are decisions made by the community to adapt to its specific schedule and needs. The teachers, called promoters, are taught through the system, go through additional training, and then train more promoters themselves. The promoters do not receive a salary but instead teach to fulfill their responsibility to the community (Davies 2010). The community is at the root of this educational model. Not only does the community take care of its teachers but the system ensures that the students also contribute to society's production by learning how to cultivate food, crops, and retain the values of the community.

Zapatista schools are open to those that are not Zapatistas and all ages are welcome and encouraged to attend school (Davies 2010). Many caracoles dictate that students pass through grade levels as they are ready without a system of tests and the possibility of failure (Davies 2010). The schools emphasize that they want everyone to be able to learn; the Zapatistas state that the government schools encourage failure in education of the indigenous people, since they teach in Spanish, which the children do not understand (Davies 2010). A graduate from a Zapatista school states,

We speak our own language. We are in resistance. Our education teaches us what is neo-liberalism, what it means to be autonomous. The government teachers often didn't show up, because they said they weren't well paid. They tried to tell us to look for work alone, to not struggle or resist against the government. But we believe that we do everything for everyone. We have to do it together. (Howard 2007)

This quote shows the importance of defining themselves as separate from the government and its policies and then actively resisting it by creating a separate and distinct system. By teaching their own children within the community, based on the society's cultural values, the Zapatistas are not only rejecting the government, but they are forming agency among themselves to fight for their right to education as development. The creation of the Zapatistas schools represents the shift from the disadvantage to the difference paradigm. The Zapatistas go beyond recognizing that there is a system of dependency, as the disadvantage paradigm identifies, in an effort to change the system through resistance—the fundamental shift to the difference framework of development.

The Zapatistas have completely separated themselves from the Mexican government as part of their resistance. Therefore, they are lacking in terms of resources such as books and supplies. The Mexican government does not support the autonomous education of the Zapatistas, but having ratified the International Labour Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention in 1990, a distinct education system for the Zapatistas should be respected. Article 27 of Convention 169 states that,

1. Education programmes and services for the people concerned shall be developed and implemented in co-operation with them to address their special needs, and shall

incorporate their histories, their knowledge and technologies, their value systems and their further social, economic and cultural aspirations.

2. The competent authority shall ensure the training of members of these peoples and their involvement in the formulation and implementation of education programmes, with a view to the progressive transfer of responsibility for the conduct of these programmes to these peoples as appropriate.

3. In addition, governments shall recognise the right of these peoples to establish their own educational institutions and facilities, provided that such institutions meet minimum standards established by the competent authority in consultation with these peoples.

Appropriate resources shall be provided for this purpose. (ILO Convention 169, Art. 27, 1989)

ILO Convention 169 states that indigenous groups have the right to create educational systems that reflect their own values and culture while being paid for the government. It dictates that governments should respect the cultures of indigenous populations and provide resources for their education, organized as they see fit. However, as can be seen by the Zapatistas' resistance, the Mexican government is not abiding by this convention.

This convention is designated solely to indigenous groups, but if the idea behind it is carried out in other communities as well it would increase the agency of the people to take control of their own development, as the Zapatistas have done. The rights outlined in this convention are essential to the freedom of education for all, not only indigenous peoples. The Zapatista model demonstrates that an education system built up and supported by the community is an efficient way to maintain the values and culture of that society and reflect the agency of the

people. Cummings would argue that the Zapatistas are adequately preserving their identity but are failing to adapt to the changes that will make them competitive and productive members of the larger society, an equally important part of education. As explored earlier, these two components are essential in promoting education as both a means of economic development and in order to embrace it as an essential freedom and development itself.

Assessment and Conclusion

Can the tension between ideological hegemony and local culture be resolved to promote agency among the rural poor? The idea of a community model suggests that greater community involvement in the educational system would promote agency among its members. Based on Amartya Sen's definition of development, exhibiting agency in education classifies as development itself in that it provides the community's members with a substantive freedom and basic human right. He states that "achievement of development is thoroughly dependent on the free agency of people" (Sen 1999, 4). However, the PROHECO and Zapatista models have both shown downfalls in this aspect. The community model as portrayed by the Zapatistas has been rejected by the Mexican government, whereas the Honduran government has exploited the PROHECO community model in order to pursue its own agenda.

The lapses of the PROHECO system could be resolved using lessons learned from the Zapatistas' autonomous education system. PROHECO, as a government program, has received support and would not have been successful in reaching the most isolated poor without its funding. However, the government has also potentially been shaped by outside funders. In early 2010, the World Bank donated 32.2 million lempiras, about USD \$1.7 million to the PROHECO education system (Secretaría de Educación de Honduras 2010). This adds further complications

to the political and ideological issues already discussed and restrains communities from accessing agency that they would be expressing in dictating their own educational system. If the government were to observe and respect the same principles that are applied to indigenous groups in ILO Convention 169 to all of its citizens, community members would be able to exhibit their agency in demanding autonomy of their educational systems. With financial support and recognition from the government, the community model as it is designed under PROHECO would be able to retain its cultural integrity while also providing substantial education to its children. Community members could decide the best system for its children and the community as a whole, whether that means vacation time during the year for harvest season, teachers from the community, or a system without tests and grade levels. This, in turn, would shift rural Honduran communities into the difference paradigm of development that focuses on embracing their agency to ensure that their community is independent and free of ideological hegemony of the West and rightly embraces their own traditions and cultures while maintaining the freedom to adapt as it sees fit.

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