

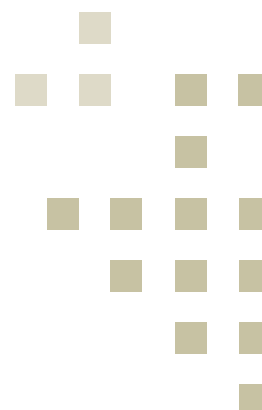


[654] Paper

Evaluation of Fadcanic's teacher training program in Nicaragua's Southern autonomous region of the Atlantic Coast

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Thanks to FADCANIC – and to Hazel Wilson in particular – for the efficient coordination of the logistics involved in this evaluation. Without this willing and able support, we would not have been able to collect so much material, and our understanding of the teacher training program and its impact on the educational sector of the RAAS would have been much reduced.

A.B. and A.R.R.

[Summary] Since 1997, FADCANIC has been implementing a training program for unqualified teachers working in primary schools of Nicaragua's Southern autonomous region of the Atlantic Coast. SAIH, the Norwegian NGO that has been funding this program, has commissioned the present evaluation. It concludes that the program has had a significant impact in terms of improving education in the region through addressing one of the most urgent needs of the educational sector, namely teacher qualifications. However, the evaluation also points out a number of other limitations for the sector, including lack of resources for materials, physical infrastructure and reasonable teacher salaries, as well as general social problems of the region. It recommends that the program is continued, and that even greater emphasis is put upon creating a teacher education appropriate to the multilingual and -cultural reality.

Keywords: Primary education, bilingual education, intercultural education, development assistance, Nicaragua

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Acronyms

BICU	Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University
FADCANIC	Fundación para la Autonomía y Desarrollo de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua
MECD	Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deportes
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NUPI	Norwegian Institute for International Affairs
RAAN	The Autonomous Region of North Atlantic Nicaragua
RAAS	The Autonomous Region of South Atlantic Nicaragua
SAIH	Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund
UCA	Universidad Centro-Americana
UNAN	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua
URACCAN	Universidad de las Regiones Autónomas de la Costa Caribe Nicaragüense

Executive summary

Background

FADCANIC, with the support of SAIH, and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (MECD) and the teacher training college of Bluefields (Escuela Normal Rigoberta Cabezas) has been executing a program of teacher training in the Autonomous Region of South Atlantic Nicaragua (RAAS). The program allowed teachers without a degree, but who were already working in the primary schools of the rural areas of the region, to attend courses in their periods of vacation, thereby eventually obtaining their formal degrees. The first phase of the program was from 1997 to 2001. Thereafter an additional phase of two years was added to allow those teachers who for one reason or another had not yet graduated, to finish their degrees.

Currently, as the second phase is completed, and FADCANIC and SAIH are discussing a possible new phase of the program, the organizations felt the need for an evaluation that would focus on the impact the program has had: the extent to which it has contributed to its stated objective of improving primary education in the region. This would be of importance for deciding on an eventual third phase, and contribute to learning from the experiences and to the improvement of future interventions in the educational sector. It was decided that the evaluation would focus on the three following areas:

- Direct impacts in terms of reducing the number of unskilled teachers
- Indirect impacts in terms of improving primary education in the region
- The relation between SAIH and FADCANIC¹

Two consultants, one Norwegian and one Nicaraguan, were contracted to make up the evaluation team. Data collection took place during one week in Norway in August, and in Nicaragua in the period 01.-18.09.03.

Main findings

The program has been well conceived and designed, and efficiently implemented. It has targeted a critical element in terms of quality of education in the region, namely that of teacher skills. The interventions have been designed to effectively overcome the problem addressed. The model of cooperation between state institutions and an NGO is interesting and successful in terms of drawing on the comparative advantages of both parties – the efficiency and flexibility of the NGO and the region-wide coverage of the state institutions. The complex logistical and organizational challenges of the program have been handled in an efficient and flexible manner. The component of supervision of the teachers in their work in the communities has been

¹ The background for introducing this theme to the evaluation is discussed in Chapter 4, in the section on the relationship between SAIH and FADCANIC.

found to have been of central importance for the positive impacts of the program.

By helping almost 300 teachers obtain their degrees, the program has had a real impact in terms of reducing the number of unskilled teachers in the RAAS. Furthermore, these teachers, who are from the villages and were already working as teachers before the start of the training program, prove to be a very stable segment of the teachers in the region. While there is a generally high 'desertion rate', these teachers tend to remain in the educational sector. Still, external factors mean that problem is not reduced to the extent originally envisioned. Most important in this respect is the large number of new teachers who have been employed by MECD, most of whom lack formal qualifications. Thus, while the program has had a significant impact in terms of alleviating the problem, it is not done away with, and there is a continuing need for this kind of program. Geographical impact of the program has been somewhat uneven, and those areas closer to the regional capital have benefited relatively more.

The program has had a significant impact on the quality of education in the region by improving teachers' skills and knowledge. Teachers' performance has improved in the following ways:

- Through the assimilation and application of new pedagogical methods
- Through improved knowledge and understanding of the subjects taught
- Through improved confidence and self-valorization among teachers, matched by increased respect from community
- Through awakened interest in continuing to expand their knowledge horizons, an indication of which is the number of teachers who continue with further university studies in their spare time

There are also many instances of teachers assuming new leadership roles in the community.

Still, these positive impacts are limited by a number of other factors, both internal and external to the teacher training program. The courses are short and cram a whole year's study into six weeks. Not all teachers are able to benefit equally from such intense study. Follow-up and supervision in the communities in between the study periods is therefore vital, but MECD lacks the resources to guarantee this for all schools. Furthermore, impact of the program would have been better if the national teacher training curriculum had been modified to meet the particular challenges of the region, such as bilingual education, multigrade teaching, and the particular challenges of teaching to read. Moreover, shortages in the schools of teachers' reference materials, textbooks, didactic materials, as well as deficient physical infrastructure, impose serious limitations on the teachers' possibilities of offering quality education. In some schools, teachers' absences from classes – for different reasons – are a continuing problem. Finally, socioeconomic factors such as difficult economic conditions; problems of drugs, alcohol, early pregnancies and prostitution; disinterest in education for children among parents; and a general erosion of traditional authority structures all negatively affect the functioning of the schools in the region.

It is common throughout the region that girls did better in school and continued studying to higher levels than boys did. Boys drop out of school both because they to a greater extent start working early, and because they are more prone to drug and alcohol abuse. Cultural factors related to masculine identity may also promote disinterest and lead to lower academic achievements. This high drop-out rate among boys is problematic as it is very directly linked to the drug and alcohol problem. Furthermore, it may reproduce traditional Nicaraguan gender patterns where males tend to back out of responsibilities. Making schools more attractive to boys would therefore seem to be an important objective.

The relationship between FADCANIC and SAIH involves much more than the simple transfer of funds. SAIH has a longstanding commitment to the Atlantic Coast and to the autonomy project, and is an organization with a particular focus on education. FADCANIC has been an extremely well-organized and competent partner for SAIH. These factors have led to a cooperation based on a high level of mutual trust, thereby promoting an open dialogue and minimizing many of the structural difficulties inherent in any donor-recipient-relationship. Spin-off effects and complementary activities have developed around the concrete project cooperation: FADCANIC was a central actor behind the establishment of the URACCAN University on the Atlantic Coast, and SAIH was both dialogue partner and donor in this process. Moreover, a number of exchange- and twinning activities between Norwegian and Atlantic Coast teachers and schools have developed around the SAIH-FADCANIC relationship. FADCANIC has been important for SAIH in terms of serving as a source of contextual knowledge of the Atlantic Coast, and in informing and inspiring SAIH's constituency in Norway.

Still, both SAIH and FADCANIC representatives have emphasized that the full potential of the relationship has not yet been realized. It is possible to envision both a stronger role of Norwegian educators in advisory and investigative functions related to the program activities, as well as forms of South-South-exchange, for instance linking the FADCANIC program with similar teacher training initiatives supported by SAIH in Bolivia.

Recommendations

- The program should continue with a new phase.
- In order to obtain maximum impact of a new phase, particularly in the areas that so far have benefited relatively less from the program, SAIH should, if possible, seek to extend the project period for the new phase, ideally to seven years.
- The component for supervision in the villages is of great importance for the program, and should, if feasible, be strengthened.
- The program should seek to give more reference material the teachers can bring to the villages.

Content-wise the courses could be improved through increased focus on the themes of bilingual education, multigrade teaching and teaching to read.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the evaluation

FADCANIC, with the support of SAIH, and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (MECD) and the teacher training college of Bluefields (Escuela Normal Rigoberta Cabezas) has been executing a program of teacher training in the Autonomous Region of the South Atlantic Nicaragua (RAAS). The program allowed teachers without a degree, but who were already working in the primary schools of the rural areas of the region, to attend courses in their periods of vacation, thereby eventually obtaining their formal degrees. The first phase of the program was from 1997 to 2001. Thereafter an additional phase of two years was added to allow those teachers who for one reason or another had not yet graduated, to finish their degrees. As part of a larger evaluation of SAIH's support to the educational sector on the Atlantic coast, realized in 2000, the organizational and processual aspects of the FADCANIC program were evaluated. While some modifications were recommended, the overall conclusions were positive (Borchgrevink and Ramirez, 2000).

Currently, as the second phase is completed, and FADCANIC and SAIH are discussing a possible new phase of the program, the organizations felt the need for an evaluation that would focus more on the impact the program has had: the extent to which it has contributed to its stated objective of improving primary education in the region. This would be of importance for deciding on an eventual third phase, and contribute to learning from the experiences and to the improvement of future interventions in the educational sector.

A detailed proposal for Terms of Reference was developed by FADCANIC (annex 1). This presupposed a fieldwork period of six weeks, and spanned a wide range of questions, with the emphasis on issues of impact and organizational learning. Due to limitations of funds, however, it was decided to reduce the scope of the evaluation. Thus, fieldwork was limited to the period from the 1st to the 19th of September (see itinerary and list of people consulted, annex 2).² While no new Terms of Reference were developed, it was decided that the evaluation would focus on the three following areas:

- Direct impacts in terms of reducing the number of unskilled teachers
- Indirect impacts in terms of improving primary education in the region
- The relation between SAIH and FADCANIC³

2 In addition, Axel Borchgrevink worked one week in August in Norway, among other things consulting documents and correspondence and interviewing the current and the three previous SAIH project coordinators who have been involved in the program.

3 The background for introducing this theme to the evaluation is discussed in Chapter 4, in the section on the relationship between SAIH and FADCANIC.

The impact would be analyzed both with respect to the strengths and weaknesses of the program, as well as to the relevant contextual factors.

Two consultants, one Norwegian and one Nicaraguan, were contracted to make up the evaluation team. The Norwegian consultant and Team Leader was Axel Borchgrevink, senior researcher and head of the section for development studies at the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI). Borchgrevink is an anthropologist with long experience in Nicaragua and a background from NGO development cooperation. The Nicaraguan consultant was Anibal Ramirez Rodriguez, retired university professor (UNAN and UCA) and president of the Centro Humboldt. Rodriguez is a geographer with a long history of involvement in different development and civil society activities, is familiar with the Atlantic Coast, and has a teaching background. The two consultants together formed the core of the team conducting the previous evaluation, referred to above.

1.2 Methodology

An impact study faces two related challenges: how to find out what changes have taken place over the project period, and how to ascertain whether and to what extent these changes can be attributed to the project. When these changes are direct outputs of the project (for instance direct impact in terms of reduction in number of unskilled teachers), these challenges are relatively manageable. However, when the sought-after impacts are more indirect and also depend on factors not directly related to the project (such as improvement in the quality of education), the task is much more complex.

There are different ways of addressing these challenges. If a baseline study was conducted before the start of the project, a similar study can be conducted during the evaluation in order to establish the changes that have taken place. Furthermore, at least theoretically, it is possible to use ‘control groups’ by comparing communities that have experienced project interventions with other communities with similar characteristics where the project has not taken place⁴. For various reasons, these options have not been open to us. No baseline study was conducted initially, and even if it had been, quality of education is such an elusive concept that its value would easily have been very limited. Furthermore, limitations of time have made the investigation of communities not involved in the project impracticable.

In terms of investigating the reduction of unskilled teachers, we largely rely on quantitative figures from FADCANIC on number of teachers graduated, teachers who have left their jobs for other occupations, and new teachers that have been hired – whether as replacements or because of increases in the Ministry’s payroll. In the schools visited, we have tried to crosscheck this information. In this sense, the direct impact in terms of reduction of the number of unskilled teachers is relatively easily gauged. We have also included a brief analysis of the kinds of new occupations sought by teachers who have left primary school, in order to assess the extent to which the investment in their training still benefits the region, or whether it is lost.

⁴ In practice, however, such communities are never completely similar, and from a strict social science methodology point of view, the identification of indirect impacts of a project into complex and open social systems could be said to be impossible.

When it comes to assessing improvements in the quality of education, we tried to obtain quantitative data on evolution of the pupils' academic standards from the MECD. However, those figures we received were incomplete, and no inferences could be drawn from them. The analysis is therefore largely based on qualitative data. To a large extent these are gleaned from interviews with different persons of the MECD (regional delegate, municipal delegates, coordinator of the bilingual program, 'technicians' who supervise the teachers in the communities), from the Escuela Normal (sub-director and course coordinator, teachers, administrative secretary for the courses), in the schools in the communities visited (directors and teachers, both graduates and actual participants from the courses, as well as teachers who have not attended them, of both primary and secondary schools) and representatives of the communities (parents of children in the schools, community leaders). The information from these sources has been complemented by own observations of the schools and the teachers giving classes.

For characterizing the relationship between SAIH and FADCANIC, we reviewed the correspondence between the organizations through the years. However, it is very evident that this only reveals a very limited aspect of the communication – the most important forms take place orally and informally. For this reason, the analysis is largely based on interviews with current and former project coordinators and contact persons of the two organizations.

The limitations of this data material should be pointed out. Firstly, while we were able to cover a lot of ground in a short space of time (we only had 12 days in the RAAS region), visiting a total number of 12 schools in 8 communities of three municipalities, the geographical coverage was slanted towards areas closer to Bluefields, thereby only doing fieldwork in those municipalities that because of the logistics have benefited most from the program⁵. But, we should point out, in spite of the limited time we had to our disposal, the program FADCANIC helped us develop included communities of most ethnic groups – mestizo, Rama, Creole, Miskitu and Garifuna. We were unable to visit any Sumu Ulwa community, or any Miskitu bilingual school.

Secondly, it is clear that most of our informants had an interest in presenting a positive picture of the program. To this could be added the fact that we were accompanied by FADCANIC's supervisor of the program, responsible among other things for giving follow-up in the villages. This proved a great advantage in terms of logistics and coordination, and she served an important function as a gate-opener for us. Still, even though she was very careful to stay away from the actual interview situations, her arrival together with us might conceivably have biased the information we received further. We think it likely that these factors have resulted in an over-emphasis on the positive aspects in our material. Nevertheless, the uniformity in responses, even among people who showed a surprising frankness and outspokenness in other respects, leads us to believe that the overall positive conclusion is still warranted.

Thirdly, it should be pointed out that our own observations in classrooms are not unbiased either. Obviously, our presence influenced the setting. Fur-

5 The original proposal from FADCANIC, with a longer period of fieldwork, would have implied a much more representative coverage.

thermore, while we could make some assessments as to the quality of the teacher's performance both in terms of pedagogy and grasp of the disciplines taught, we had little ground for comparison. In terms of knowing how they taught before they entered the training courses, we were dependent upon what was told us by our informants.

Fourthly, language is inevitably a problem in a multilingual setting such as Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast. Our interviews were mostly conducted in Spanish. This proved problematic with informants with other first languages. With respect to interviews with the teachers and other MECD employees, this might have impeded communication to a small extent with a few of them, but the large majority of them were sufficiently fluent in Spanish for this not to present any problem. With other members of the community, however, we experienced some difficulties. Some of our attempts at interviewing in English were unsuccessful, as the difference between their Creole English and our own made communication halting and we were unable to break down initial reticence among informants. In other cases, however, interviews in English functioned well.

The report should be read with these reservations in mind. To some extent, the conclusions must be tentative. Still, we have done what we could to cross-check data, and have found no indications that counter our over-all conclusions.

2. The Teacher Training Program

Within its overall objectives of promoting the autonomy process of the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast, FADCANIC has consistently seen the educational sector as being of fundamental importance. One area of concern in that respect has been the level of skills and knowledge among the region's teachers. For different reasons, there has been a high ratio of teachers without the formal competence required. While this is a problem common to much of rural Nicaragua, it can be argued that it becomes particularly critical in the multi-lingual context of the Atlantic Coast: If an unqualified teacher faces difficulties in performing his job in a monolingual setting in the Pacific, how much more difficult must it be to teach in a bilingual school.

FADCANIC had previously realized a teacher training program in the RAAN. In 1996, SAIH and FADCANIC agreed to cooperate on a similar program in the RAAS. The idea was to give unqualified teachers, already working in the primary schools of the region, the opportunity to complete their degrees. The only teacher training college of the region – the Escuela Normal Rigoberto Cabezas – would give the instruction, in modalities adapted to these teachers working situation. This was organized in two different forms: Those teachers working in Bluefields would attend classes at night, while for the teachers from the rest of the region, courses were organized to take place in the vacation periods, one month in January and two weeks in July.

The teachers had different educational levels to start with. Some only lacked a year or two to obtain their teacher's degree, others only had primary school, and some had not even completed that. Thus, there had to be organized courses for each level of the five years of teacher training secondary school. In addition, FADCANIC arranged 'leveling courses' for those in need of finishing their primary schooling.

The program was closely coordinated with the MECD, and was based on the national study plans for obtaining the degree of primary school teacher. While FADCANIC organized and covered the expenses of transport, food and board for the teacher-students, as well as some materials, other related costs, and eventually a component of supervision of the teachers in the communities, MECD, through the Escuela Normal, was responsible for the courses and the teaching.

The program started up in January 1997, and its first phase ended after five years, in 2001. In connection with a review in 2000 of all the programs supported by SAIH within the educational sector of the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast⁶, it was recommended to extend the program for two years. In that way it would be possible to give those who were enrolled in the courses, but for one reason or another would not finish their degree within 2001, the opportunity to graduate. This extension was approved – and thus allowed the program to continue until the finish of the July 2003 course.

6 Headed by the two consultants responsible also for the present report.

3. Findings

3.1 Diversity of the region

The cultural and linguistic diversity of the RAAS is well-known, and the region's autonomy is justified largely with reference to this. However, it is important to recognize that there are large variations within the region also along other dimensions, and that the diversity of the region has consequences for the program and its results. In other words, because of this diversity, the impact of the program does to some extent vary across the area.

3.1.1 Linguistic diversity

There are at least seven different languages used in the schools and communities of the RAAS: Spanish, Creole, Miskitu, Garífuna, Rama, Sumu Ulwa and Standard English. In total, there are 27 bilingual primary schools in the region. A large number of additional schools – where teaching is Spanish monolingual – have a significant number of students who do not have Spanish as their mother tongue.

Some communities are wholly mestizo, and Spanish is the only language used, both in the schools and everyday life. At the other extreme are Garífuna and Rama communities, where Creole is the dominant language in the community, while schools are bilingual Standard English and Spanish, and the languages of Garífuna or Rama (little used in practice) are taught as a separate subject. Thus, given that Creole and Standard English are counted as two different languages, the students are confronted with four different languages in the school setting. Bilingual schools in Miskitu speaking communities, on the other hand, limit themselves to two languages, Miskitu and Spanish. Furthermore, the degree to which a non-mestizo community is exposed to Spanish language – through Spanish speaking migrants, or easy access to and regular contact with neighboring Spanish-speaking communities – will also have a significant impact on the functioning of bilingual education.

In sum, then, while bilingual and multilingual education always poses particular challenges, the concrete forms these challenges take will vary according to the specific linguistic situation of each community.

3.1.2 Economic and social diversity

Economic adaptations and living standards also vary across the region. Basically, fishing is most important for coastal villages, while agriculture dominates in the interior. Both within fishing and agriculture one can find adaptations that vary along the dimension subsistence to commercial/industrial. Most important for the schools is the economic living standard provided by different livelihoods. For instance, in the interior village of Asentamiento Samuel Lau, where wage work on the neighboring African palm plantation

was by far the most important income source, we were told that in some households, lack of food was the direct reason for not sending the children to school. In the subsistence-oriented fishing economy of Rama Key, on the other hand, food security seemed high. Still, for cash-strapped families, school related expenses such as for uniforms and shoes meant that children could not participate in the national holiday parades of September. In the somewhat more cash-oriented and affluent fishing village of Tasbapounie, the schools seem to be much less affected by such problems. Thus, while the functioning of the schools are affected by the economic setting in which they exist, this setting is by no means uniform over the area. Our general impression is that food security is better in the coastal areas, and that school expenses are a higher burden in subsistence-oriented communities.

A specific problem affecting the youth – and consequently the schools – on the Atlantic Coast – is drug abuse. Due to the region's location on or near the transit routes northwards from Colombia, cocaine and crack use has become widespread among young men and boys. In addition to the other problems this implies, drug abuse is also often cited as one of the causes of the high drop-out rate from schools, especially among boys. This problem is most serious in the coastal communities.

3.1.3 Accessibility

The RAAS is a large region with a limited road network. Access to most communities is by water, sometimes in combination with travel on horseback or foot. Not all communities can be reached from Bluefields in a day. There are several implications of this. Basically, they all make the school situation more difficult in the less accessible areas.

In terms of number of unqualified teachers, the small and distant communities have generally been worse off. It is in these communities where there have been greatest difficulties in finding qualified teachers, and where those who have been hired generally have had the least number of years of schooling. To this should be added the fact that the program has had least impact in these areas. Difficult transport implied reduced participation in the courses, and low initial school achievements meant that these teachers needed to be integrated into the program from the start, or not at all (only in the beginning was it possible to do the first year of secondary level, after that new students could only be integrated into the courses if they already had passed this level, and so the requirements for being accepted into the program kept increasing year for year).

Also in other respects, the school situation is more difficult in these areas. There is a general tendency for schools to receive less support from MECD the farther away they are from the regional capital. This applies both to material support – for textbooks, other didactic materials and physical infrastructure – and to supervising, training and counseling. One exception to this tendency is that some schools are designed as 'model schools' and receive particular support through special programs or projects. It is mainly the bilingual schools of the region which benefit in this way. Another instance is Kukra Hill where the Spanish NGO Ayuda en Acción gives different kinds of support to the schools of one part of the municipality. Again, however,

these are the schools that can be reached by road, while those schools with more difficult access do not receive this support.

In addition to the problems of having less qualified teachers and receiving less material and technical support, the more distant communities also tend to be smaller. This also affects the schools, in the sense that there are fewer teachers – in some cases only one – who are therefore more alone and isolated in their work. Moreover, they have to handle the additional problem of multigrade teaching.

3.2 The primary schools

The schools of the region operate under a number of limitations, some related to the institutional structure, others to the wider socio-economic context.

If the salary level of teachers is an indication of the importance given to education in a country, then Nicaragua shows very little concern for the sector. The salary levels are by far the lowest in Central America. While a primary school teacher in Nicaragua earns USD 65-100 per month (depending on qualifications and years of experience), her Honduran counterpart makes USD 200. While the economic level of Honduras is more or less the same as Nicaragua, the slightly better-off countries of Guatemala and El Salvador reportedly pay their teachers USD 400 per month, while Costa Rica and Panama have salaries around USD 500 (data on the other Central American countries from interview with Alicia Slate, USAID-Managua). Given this low salary level in Nicaragua, it is no wonder that the MECD experiences difficulties in hiring and keeping qualified teachers.

Lack of resources also affects the schools in other ways. For the teachers, shortages of all kinds of background material make it difficult for them to prepare their classes and to use methodologies based on the students doing their own literature research. The teachers who have participated in the courses have received certain basic materials that are helpful (six books, including dictionary, Spanish literature collection, and atlas, plus Xerox copies of (a minor) part of the material used in the courses), but this means only a very slight reduction in what continues to be a major problem. Shortages of paper, cardboard markers and similar materials hinder the application of some of the pedagogic methods they have learnt from the courses, and the lack of textbooks for all students means that traditional and backward teaching methods based on the students copying what the teacher writes on the blackboard must to some extent continue. While teaching is supposed to be free in Nicaragua, payments for books and school materials can be a heavy burden for some parents and may be a motivating factor for taking children out of schools.

Lack of resources in the MECD also means that follow-up and supervision of teachers is weak. While there are technical supervisors at regional and municipal levels, they largely lack the necessary funds for visiting the schools in the communities. Thus, apart from the schools in the municipal centers, and those for which special project support exist (largely the bilingual ones), schools do not receive follow-up and supervision in the field. The teachers in these schools are instead at times invited to seminars or

workshops in the regional centers. Still, teachers in the more distant communities do feel rather isolated, and the supervision visits of the project have therefore been of great importance. (MECD has also used the opportunity of the transport available to let the technical supervisors go along on these visits.)

The size of classes varies from school to school. In some cases we found classes of more than 50 students – obviously not conducive to an optimal learning situation. In other schools, classes of around 20-25 students implied much more favorable conditions.

In some communities, parents complained over substantial absences of teachers from classes. There are a number of explanations for such absences, ranging from their holding community leadership positions that require time off from work, for meetings, travel or other duties; to studies that require time for attending classes and for doing homework; economic necessities that require the attention to other income-generating activities (while regrettable, this is nevertheless understandable given the salary level); living or visiting family outside the community; general de-motivation due to difficult working conditions, low pay, lack of attention from MECD and little support from and cooperation with parents; and a general lack of work discipline in some schools due to weak leadership. While it is difficult for us to gauge the extent of this problem, it is obviously a real problem for some communities.

While most children are enrolled and start in school, not all finish the six grades of the primary level. We do not have exact figures on this, but estimates from several of the schools indicated that around 50% graduate from the sixth grade. Most drop-outs apparently take place in fifth and sixth grade, although there are also those who leave earlier.

There are different factors behind the high drop-out rates. Economic conditions may be one reason. For some parents it is difficult to afford the necessary school expenses. In other cases lack of food in the house means that children are not sent to school. More indirectly, a difficult economic situation may force the family to leave the area in search of work, or oblige the child to start working, or stay home to look after smaller children. Lack of concern with children's education among parents may be related to this, perhaps due to a perception of schooling being irrelevant to the life situation of the family. Another reason may be due to low academic achievements. Students who repeatedly fail to pass to the next grade quickly become de-motivated. Being older than their classmates is another problem these students encounter. As children enter into puberty, skipping classes, sometimes because of drug and or alcohol abuse, become a problem for some.

It is important to see that school drop-out is not a single isolated event, but usually a process starting with low school attendance, low academic achievements and repeating classes. Often, all the factors mentioned above may be involved.

There are big gender differences here. While ratio of boys and girls in first grade is almost 50/50, there is a marked overweight of boys who drop out early. This was found in all the communities we visited. It also appears from regional statistics of school enrolment, which show a fairly even gender distribution in primary school, while in secondary school there are 58% girls to 42% boys. Considering that not all communities have secondary

schools and many students therefore need to leave home in order to continue their education, and that there are a lot of traditional barriers to girls leaving in this way, this gender difference is really astounding. (It is also found among the teachers taking part in the courses, where women outnumber the men by two to one.)

This pattern seems to hold for all the ethnic groups, and must relate to common ideas of gender identity. Boys are more liable to start income-generating work early, and the use of drugs (and to some extent alcohol) is mostly a male arena. Nicaraguan boys are generally less conscientious and responsible than their sisters, and they may also place less value on academic achievements. In sum, this makes girls by far the best performers in school, and for this reason least likely to drop out.

While the high drop-out rate is problematic in itself, the gender issue is an additional cause for concern. On the one hand, the drug problem is becoming the largest social problem in the coastal communities, and one that cannot be resolved solely through policing. If boys could be enticed to stay on longer in school, this might be one contribution. Furthermore, the fact that boys tend to drop out of school early would seem to reproduce and perpetuate a gender identity with little emphasis on responsibilities and continuity. And as drop-outs are mostly boys, measures to stimulate their continuation in school would be the most efficient means of reducing over-all drop-out rates.

3.3 Number of unqualified teachers

Unfortunately we did not receive the data promised us by MECD, which would have allowed us to explore fully the question of what impact the project has had in terms of reducing the number of unqualified teachers in the region. The following discussion is therefore somewhat impressionistic, largely based on figures from diverse sources that are not always compatible.

The original project document stated the project objective of training 337 teachers, thereby reducing the percentage of unqualified teachers from 62% to 11.9%. (In some documents the initial rate of unqualified teachers is given as 80%, and according to the regional delegate of MECD it was around 90%.)

Throughout the period 1997 to 2003, a total of 265 teachers have received their degrees with the help of the program. In addition there are a number of teachers who are due to graduate in January 2004. Those we interviewed manifested their willingness to attend the remaining course even in the case that there would be no FADCANIC support this time. Thus, the number of teachers trained through the program will increase, and should come quite close to the target originally envisioned.

While the drop-out rate from the courses has been somewhat higher than what these figures seem to indicate, the impressive result has been achieved partly due to the fact that new candidates have become integrated into the program throughout the years.

Furthermore, our data indicate a high degree of stability among these teachers – relatively few leave the school sector. Of the 265 graduated teachers, only 22 (or 8%) were no longer employed in the educational sector of

the Atlantic Coast (and of these 22, five were reportedly looking for new employment within the sector). This contrast clearly with what MECD reports to be the case among the rest of its teacher corps, where a high desertion rate and turnover exist. While the level of rotation in the labor force in Nicaragua is generally high, the low salary levels of teachers serve to reinforce this tendency. Clearly, however, by targeting teachers who are from the villages and already practicing there as teachers, the program has identified a segment that is highly stable. This, of course, serves to protect the investment the program has made in their training.

Not all teachers remain in the primary schools, however. A further 39 (15%) have been promoted in some way, and now work in secondary schools or in other capacities within MECD. This leads to vacancies in the primary schools that are often filled by new unqualified teachers. Still, the promoted teachers continue to use their newly acquired skills for the benefit of the educational sector of the region, and we maintain that also in these cases the impact of the program is strong and beneficial. In many cases these graduates go on to fill important functions – such as supervisors or municipal delegates – where the impact of their training may be even greater than when working as teachers.

An interesting finding is that a large number of the teachers we met have continued to study, through the part-time programs offered by the URACCAN and BICU universities. (This is probably most prevalent in those areas with easy access to Bluefields and Laguna de Perlas – which were also the only areas we were able to visit.) Conceivably, upon obtaining university degrees, a number of these teachers will also move on to higher responsibilities. Still, we find the interest awakened among these teachers to continue educating themselves and expanding their knowledge horizons to be another positive impact of the program, which will both directly and indirectly lead to higher educational levels in the region.

However, even though the program has produced more than 200 qualified teachers who continue working in the primary schools, the number of unqualified teachers has still gone up over these years. According to FADCANIC figures, the number has increased from 337 in 1997 to 520 in 2002. The main reason for this has been the expansion of the number of schools in the region and of teachers employed by MECD. According to the regional delegate of MECD, the number of teachers employed rose from 380 to ‘more than a thousand’ between 1997 and today. While the current figure she gave seems to tally with other information we have received, we are more doubtful if the initial number can have been as low as 380. FADCANIC’s original project proposal (from 1996) gives the number of teachers as 673. An estimate could thus be that the number of teachers has grown by 4-500. (One reason for this massive growth in the number of teachers is simply the increase in school enrolment. Over the first five of these seven years, the number of pupils enrolled grew by more than 30%.) In addition to the increase in the total number of teachers, MECD has also had to hire new teachers to replace those who have quit. Obviously, it has been impossible for MECD to hire qualified teachers to fill all these positions. In sum then, the positive impact of the program notwithstanding, a growth in

number of unqualified teachers is only to be expected. Without the program, the situation would have been much worse.

The conclusion, however, is that the problem with unskilled teachers has not been done away with. There will continue to be a need for similar programs for some time to come.

3.4 The training courses

3.4.1 Organization

While we have not paid great attention to the organizational aspects of the program, it is nevertheless worth pointing out that there was great agreement among all our informants that the courses were well organized. The logistical challenges involved in getting teachers from all over the region to Bluefields and Laguna de Perlas at the right time, as well as arranging for room and board, are large. Similarly, it is no easy task to arrange the practical organization of courses, where a year's curriculum is compacted and taught in two periods totalling around six weeks, and where students study at different levels depending on their initial skills. (Students who already have a secondary school degree – but not from a teacher training college – have to pick classes of pedagogy from different years of the normal study plan, thus complicating coordination even further.) FADCANIC and the Escuela Normal seem to have handled these challenges admirably. While a few initial difficulties with regards to transport and food were reported by some of the course participants, they emphasized that FACDANIC had been responsive and flexible in order to resolve the problems.

One element worth pointing out is the model of cooperation between an NGO and state institutions, where both sides contribute according to their strengths. Thus, FADCANIC has been responsible for the efficient and flexible organization of the program, while the participation of state institutions has ensured its region-wide impacts and coordination within national educational plans. It should be emphasized that in a polarized and politicized context such as Nicaragua, succeeding in establishing such cooperation across the state – NGO and the government – (perceived) opposition divides is no small achievement.

It is possible to see some of the weak sides of the program detailed below as related to this particular institutional set-up and the trade-offs this imply. One of the points upon which the MECD had to insist was that the courses be based on the national plan for teacher training. Thus, there was no room for adjusting curricula in accordance with the particularities of the region. In particular, this meant that the particular challenges of bilingual education have not been focused in the courses (see section 3.4.2.1). Now, however, a new degree for bilingual teachers is being developed, and this problem will hopefully be reduced in the future.

3.4.2 Contents

A requirement from MECD was that the teacher courses had to follow the national curriculum and study plans for teacher training. While understand-

able, this set clear limits to the possibilities of developing a teacher training program adapted to the realities of the region.

Still, adaptations to the national study plan had to be made due to the nature of the course. A whole year's classes had to be crammed into two periods totalling around six weeks. This meant compacting themes and giving emphasis to the areas considered most important. In this adaptation of the standard teaching plan, it was of course possible to give priority to those areas considered most vital within the context of the Atlantic Coast. Still, this did not allow for an expansion on subjects considered of special importance – such as for instance bilingual education – it only allowed the courses to concentrate the compacting and cutting down to those areas considered less vital.

3.4.2.1 Bilingual education

The fact that the courses have not included the theme of bilingual education is a serious limitation for a program directed at a region marked by such linguistic diversity as the RAAS. In order to appreciate this point, it is necessary to point out some of the complexities of bilingual education in the region. The plan for bilingual education has been developed up to 4th grade of primary school. Thus, in the first four grades, English or Miskitu (depending on the type of bilingual school – in RAAN there also exist bilingual Mayagna schools) is the medium of instruction in all subjects, except for Spanish. Spanish is given as a separate subject, 45-90 minutes daily, and in these classes the medium of instruction is supposed to be Spanish. From 5th grade, Spanish becomes the medium of instruction for all subjects.

There are several difficulties here. For a student living in a community where Spanish is hardly spoken, it is difficult to learn the new language sufficiently for it to function as the medium of instruction by fifth grade. This is therefore a difficult year for the students of these schools.

Another problem is that students are learning to read in two languages more or less simultaneously. In theory, they are supposed to learn to read in their mother tongue in first grade, and in Spanish in second. In practice many do not learn to read in first grade, and they learn reading in the two languages in parallel. One complication this involves concerns the different sounds of the two languages. Spanish is in many respects the more 'logical' language, in that there is almost complete correspondence between pronunciation and spelling. Furthermore, the teachers are only trained to teach to read in Spanish. The end result is that many students appear to learn to read better in Spanish than in their mother tongue. However, this is usually an ability to read aloud, which does not imply understanding of what they read. Reading in the sense of being able to understand and assimilate a text is difficult for many in both languages.

In the English bilingual schools, an additional problem is that the language used in school is (at least supposedly) Standard English, which is quite different from the Creole that is the students' first language.

The matter is further complicated by the fact that many of the teachers have difficulties with Spanish themselves – sometimes also with Standard English. This seriously hinders their ability to provide quality teaching. It also promotes the tendency to use Creole or Miskitu in the classes that are

supposed to be in Spanish. While this is strictly discouraged in the bilingual educational plans and by the pedagogic advisors, it is widely practiced. While teachers claim this is the only way to make the students understand, it is obviously also caused by their lack of fluency in Spanish. The end result is that students learn less Spanish.

The above difficulties have not been pointed out as some kind of argument against bilingual education. We believe bilingual education is important for the students and ethnic groups of the Atlantic Coast. The point, however, is that bilingual education involves complexities and challenges that are additional to those encountered in any educational situation. It is therefore a shortcoming of the program that it has not prepared the teachers specifically for these additional challenges that a large percentage of them have to face.

At least, it has been a short-coming up to now. Currently, MECD, URACCAN, other civil society organizations and the Escuela Normal are developing a new curriculum for 'bilingual teachers'. It is being used for the first year students studying in the regular classes this year. As we understand it, the idea is to develop the study plan on a year by year basis, so that by the time the current first year class reaches the fifth and final year, the whole study plan will be completed. We are not certain what this means for the new round of 'FADCANIC courses' planned to start next year, or whether they will be able to use the new curriculum. We strongly urge FADCANIC and the Escuela Normal to do what is possible to have bilingual education included in the study program also for those teachers who already have completed a significant part of their secondary education, and therefore only lack one or a few of the last years.

3.4.2.2 Multigrade teaching

A large number – perhaps even the majority – of the primary schools in the region have at least some multigrade classes (classes where pupils from different grades are taught together, by the same teacher and in the same classroom). Obviously, this makes the teacher's job more complex. Yet this aspect is not given much attention in the courses. There is only one class given on the subject. In our fieldwork, there we only visited one school that had multigrade classes, so our material on the subject is quite limited. But one 'multigrade teacher' we interviewed, who was generally very positive with respect to all that she had learnt in the courses, still stated flatly that she had not learnt anything helpful with respect to the challenges of teaching different grades in the same classroom.

An additional problem has been that the class on multigrade teaching has been given only in the fifth and last year, in accordance with the national study plan. For those teachers starting with year one, it meant that they would have to wait four years before this very real challenge they deal with in their daily work were to be addressed in the courses. Recognizing this problem, FADCANIC and the Escuela Normal were able to adjust the plans somewhat, so that the class was given in the fourth year instead.

3.4.2.3 *Teaching to read*

Learning to read is perhaps *the* basic skill taught in school, upon which all subsequent learning depends. If this skill is not learnt properly in the first or second grade, it will have repercussions on most aspects of the student's future schooling.

In the schools we visited, the number of students with difficulties in learning to read seemed to be alarmingly large. There is supposed to be automatic promotion between grades in the first years, and third and fourth grade teachers complained that too many students were unable to read. Fifth and sixth grade teachers complained that while students might be able to read aloud, they had not mastered the art of understanding what they read. The automatic promotion is disliked by most teachers, and it is not practiced everywhere. Thus, in Asentamiento Samuel Lau, the problem had found another expression: Even though this was a multigrade school, they had still found room for two first grade classes, one for first-year students, and another for those who had not learnt to read in the first (or even the second) year and were therefore obliged to repeat the grade.

The reasons for these difficulties are probably many and varied. Often, we were told, students would be away from school for weeks or months as they went with their parents to other parts of the country, in search of work or for other reasons. The complex linguistic situation was probably also part of the explanation in some places, but it should be pointed out that the problem is also found in communities that are Spanish monolingual.

Given the fundamental importance of this skill, it would seem that the courses might pay even greater attention to methodologies of teaching to read. In order to inform such an increased focus, it would be useful to do a study of how reading is taught in the schools in the region, and what the reasons are for the high number of students who have difficulties in learning to read.

3.4.3 **Impacts**

All teachers we have spoken with have manifested very clearly that they have benefited greatly from the courses and therefore perform better as teachers. The most important thing learnt, just about all of them agreed, related to pedagogic methods. The following statement, or very similar versions of it, was repeated so often that it sounded almost like a mantra:

‘Before I taught in the traditional way: speaking and writing on the blackboard while the children kept quiet. Now the children are much more active, they work in groups and we use materials from the surroundings. Now the teacher is more of a guide.’

While the uniformity of the answers made one think of a formula learnt by heart, it was clear that also in practice, the teachers had changed their way of teaching, and that a more active pedagogy is becoming more common in the schools. Our impression in this respect was also confirmed by MECD supervisors who have been advising the teachers in the schools.

Interestingly, in explaining how they had assimilated this new way of working, the teachers referred not to theoretical presentations of constructivist pedagogic theory, but to the experience of learning they had had as students in the teacher training courses. The active involvement of the students; the obligation to participate; the central role of own research; and the way the professors related to the students without any top-down attitude were all mentioned as important in this respect.

It was quite clear that this education in pedagogy responded to a clearly felt need among most of the course participants. Having worked as teachers with only minimal preparation, they had often felt insecure in their job. For this reason, these teachers were highly motivated students and seemed to soak up the new knowledge. One important impact stemming from this is that these teachers all feel much more secure and confident in their role. Probably this increased self-confidence in itself also leads to better teaching.

In addition to pedagogy, the courses should give the teachers better knowledge of the subjects they teach. While some teachers also mentioned this as important and useful, this aspect was clearly less emphasized in their comments. Obviously the teachers have improved their knowledge and understanding of the various subjects, but it is extremely difficult for us to assess the degree of improvement, or how this impacts on the education given.

It is worth pointing out, though, that these teachers are studying under very difficult conditions. What normal students have a whole year to assimilate, they must learn in two periods totalling six weeks. Themes are compacted, and what would be dealt with repeatedly in the regular course can only be taken up once in the FADCANIC courses. While the students are highly motivated to get the most out of the opportunity, and group dynamics aid learning, there are also problems related to the need to bring and care for children, to attend to health or other imperative issues that can only be dealt with in the city, and to being away from one's family and living under unfamiliar conditions. Furthermore, the rest of the year is spent in villages where access to literature and background material is mostly nonexistent. It is clear that these are far from ideal learning conditions. Thus, while students soaked up pedagogic elements from the course, it does not seem unreasonable to expect that learning in terms of the contents of the different subjects may be patchier. While we met some excellent teachers who really seemed to have picked up a lot from the courses, others seemed weaker and probably were less able to get full benefits from the short and intense study periods.

The fact that the courses are so short points to the potential for increasing learning impact through the use of the periods in between the courses. The idea of developing self-study modules which the teachers could bring to the villages and work with in preparation for the next course, has been discussed. This could be a great improvement, but given the resources necessary to develop such modules, it does not seem very realistic. It is moreover an open question of to what extent the teacher-students would have the time, capacity and discipline necessary for such self-study. The lack of bibliographic resources in the villages also makes this option more difficult.

In this connection, the importance of the supervision FADCANIC has given in the villages cannot be underestimated. The visits by the FADCANIC supervisors – who also functioned as teachers in the courses –

served a very important function in terms of reinforcing what was taught in the courses. They also gave the teachers inspiration and reinforced motivation for the pedagogic mission – which sometimes sagged as time since the course passed by without anyone paying any interest to the work of the teachers. The teachers all manifested that the FADCANIC supervisors had been extremely useful, and when we travelled with one of them, the respect, trust and genuine liking she was met with everywhere was very evident.

A large number of the teachers we interviewed who had graduated from the courses, had continued to study through one of the part-time programs offered by the URACCAN and BICU universities. The themes studied include psycho-pedagogy, Spanish, English, history and sociology. These programs are given in Bluefields and in Laguna de Perlas, and classes are given either on Saturdays or in four concentrated periods through the year. The high percentage of teachers taking part in this program was probably partly due to the fact that our fieldwork only covered areas relatively close to Bluefields and Laguna de Perlas – in more distant areas the possibilities for taking part in these courses are obviously smaller. Still, the fact that so many continue to study must be counted a very positive impact of the program, indicating that the courses had inspired the teachers' interest in expanding their knowledge horizons and improving their capacities.

One stated objective of the FADCANIC program has been to develop the capacities of the teachers to function as resource persons and community leaders. We have not investigated this aspect very systematically, but it seems to be the case that as teachers have gained in self-confidence and professional self-esteem, this has been matched by a recognition and increased respect from the community. This is at least the impression gained from interviews with the teachers, and is supported by anecdotic evidence such as the fact that the communal board in Rama Key was dominated by the teachers, or that a teacher had been elected mayor in Kukra Hill. However, we have not investigated systematically the participation of teachers in leadership positions.

As a footnote, it could be pointed out that it may be a mixed blessing when teachers assume such functions, because it takes time and resources away from teaching. Thus, in Kukra Hill, not only did the new mayor leave the school where she had been working, she also brought two of her colleagues with her to leading positions within the municipality's administration. Similarly, in Rama Key, some parents complained that the political responsibilities of the teachers kept them away from classes too much of the time.

3.5 The SAIH – FADCANIC relationship

3.5.1 Background

FADCANIC receives support for its programs from both NORAD, through the Norwegian embassy in Managua, and from SAIH. The major part of the SAIH support also originates from NORAD, through the 'framework' agreement that SAIH has with NORAD. In general, NORAD wishes to avoid such cases of double channels to the same recipient – apparently in or-

der to avoid inefficiencies and duplication of efforts. This report will not directly address the question of whether it is sensible to maintain this kind of double funding structure⁷, but is rather an attempt at characterizing what flows in the relationship between the two NGOs in addition to the purely financial support.

From an abstract point of view, the funding relationship NORAD – Norwegian NGO – National NGO is obviously more complex than NORAD – National NGO. The question of what it is that the Norwegian NGO brings into the equation, what its ‘added value’ is, therefore naturally arises. NORAD, through its Department for Civil Society Support, has for a long time challenged and solicited the Norwegian NGOs to specify what their roles in the partnership are, and what kind of added value they bring. However, while most program officers or project coordinators of Norwegian NGOs are highly convinced that their organization fulfills important functions over and above the transfer of funds, it has often been difficult to state explicitly what these functions are.

There may be many reasons for this difficulty in defining the contributions of the Norwegian organization. For instance, much of the Norwegian NGO’s input into the project process arises out of the dialogue with the partner organization, and trying to specify who contributes what in this case may be a futile exercise that misses the point. Furthermore, the role of the Norwegian NGO will vary according to capacities and characteristics of each national partner organizations, different project types, and the various phases of the project, thus making generalizations difficult. It is also worth remembering that an important ‘selling point’ for the Norwegian NGOs in soliciting NORAD support is the strength of its partner organizations, and there may therefore be a reluctance to expose weaknesses in their administrative routines or otherwise that the Norwegian NGO has addressed. Moreover, the relationship between NGOs are not impersonal institutional interfaces, but to a very large extent inhere in the personal contacts and degree of trust and friendship that is established between the contact persons of the organizations. These are dimensions not easily dealt with in standard NORAD reporting formats, yet they are fundamental for mitigating the inequalities and structural difficulties of the donor – recipient relationship, thereby promoting transparency and dialogue on difficulties.

Another important point is that ‘value added’ should not only be sought in what the Norwegian NGO may contribute in terms of aiding the institution building of its partner organization and the successful realization of the project objectives. A relationship always implies two-way flows, and the Norwegian NGO may gain knowledge and experiences of importance both for its own consolidation and professionalization, as well as serving to raise the awareness and inspire its membership base or constituency.

7 Although in brief it could be pointed out that the FADCANIC programs supported by NORAD Managua and by SAIH belong to different sectors (the NORAD program is an environmental/reforestation project); that the SAIH project falls squarely within the Norwegian NGOs area of expertise and strategic focus on education; that FADCANIC appears to be a sufficiently consolidated organization to be able to handle different funding channels according to every administrative requirement; and that it would seem to be in FADCANIC’s interest to maintain a diversity of donors in order to have a more secure funding basis.

Based on the above considerations, the following is an attempt at specifying ‘value added’ in the SAIH – FADCANIC relationship. One word of caution should be given: While documents and other persons have been consulted, the main sources of information for the analysis have been the key persons from the two organizations who have been involved in the cooperation. Thus, even though we believe the main thrust of the presentation to be correct, the possibility that it is painted in too rosy a color should not be discarded.

3.5.2 Value added

For SAIH, the form of its relationships with partner NGOs varies according to the capacities of the organization. In the cooperation with organizations with weaker administrative structures, relatively more time must be spent on following up project cooperation routines, such as project proposals, LFA, progress indicators, budgets, reports, accounts, audits. In many respects, this implies a stronger role of the Norwegian NGO and consequently more value added. But of course, this is not to say that this is better form of development cooperation. FADCANIC is fairly close to the other side of the spectrum. It is a very well organized NGO, which has no problems in fulfilling these administrative requirements. Consequently, there is no need for any back-stopping functions from SAIH in these respects.

FADCANIC is also seen to be an organization with solid roots in the Atlantic Coast region. With competent collaborators spread all over the RAAS and RAAN, and large amounts of goodwill among communities and institutions, FADCANIC is not an NGO of the kind that basically exists in its offices in Managua and its contacts with international donors.

SAIH has shown continuity and stability in its commitment to supporting development efforts on the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast. The organization has been working continuously in the area since 1980. Furthermore, for at least 15 years⁸, SAIH’s activities have been oriented in support of the autonomy process and indigenous rights issues of the Atlantic Coast.

Furthermore, SAIH has always had a strategic focus on education, and, through its Norwegian constituency of students and academics, a knowledge base to draw on for its work in this sector. In this sense, SAIH has been a very competent partner for FADCANIC in the different projects aimed at the educational sector. (The teacher training program under review was preceded by cooperation on two other programs: PRUEDIS II and what eventually became the URACCAN university.)⁹

⁸ Perhaps even longer – but this is far as the authors’ knowledge stretches.

⁹ While the purpose here is really not to contrast SAIH’s work with NORAD’s, it is tempting to point out that the mentioned characteristics of SAIH’s work in Nicaragua – continuity in the zone, commitment to indigenous rights and an educational focus – differ markedly from NORAD’s record. Throughout at least the first half of the 90s, NORAD had an explicit focus on the former Nicaraguan regions I, V and VI (Nueva Segovia, Matriz, Estelí, Matagalpa, Jinotega, Boaco and Chontales) and discouraged Norwegian NGOs work elsewhere; while currently education is very high among the priorities of the political leadership of Norwegian development cooperation, it was difficult for an organization such as SAIH to get acceptance for this position some 10 years ago; and it is difficult to maintain that Norwegian bilateral support to Nicaragua has been particularly geared to issues of indigenous rights – even though this is also sailing up as an important area in Norwegian development policy.

As SAIH has seen FADCANIC as a solid organization that is well rooted in the region, and FADCANIC has experienced SAIH as a loyal, stable and committed partner with particular competence in the educational field, conditions have been favorable for the development of mutual trust between the organizations. While there has been some rotation in SAIH project coordinators for Nicaragua – there have been four over the ten years or so of cooperation between the two NGOs – there has in all cases been established good personal relationships between the individuals directly responsible for the cooperation. Such mutual trust at organizational and personal levels allows some of the structural limitations of a donor-recipient relationship to be transcended. Thus, confident that SAIH will be willing to listen, FADCANIC may openly admit difficulties in the project implementation, and knowing the capacities of its partner, SAIH may be flexible and willing to adjust plans according to the proposals of the other. Such transparency and open dialogue is an important precondition for the possibility of adjusting project strategies when necessary in order to achieve project objectives.

One very concrete instance of such processes concerns the inclusion of the component of supervision in the field. This was not originally contemplated in the project proposal. However, the idea of including this component was born in the discussions between FADCANIC and SAIH on the experiences and weaknesses of the first project year. As our study has shown, this component has been of fundamental importance for the positive impacts achieved by the project.

Value added is by no means limited to the concrete project in question. Spin-off effects and complementary activities have developed around the concrete project cooperation. One example of this might be the establishment of the URACCAN University. FADCANIC was the central actor behind this, and SAIH was one of the donor organizations functioning as a discussion partner in the process, from the initial (and grandiose) ideas for this new institution to the concrete (and more realistic) plans that were eventually realized – with SAIH as one of the donors from the beginning.

Another set of additional activities arising out of the SAIH – FADCANIC relationship relates to the many exchange- and twinning arrangements between Norwegian and Nicaraguan schools and teachers. The Norwegian Teacher's Union (Norsk lærerforbund) has supported and given follow-up to the teacher training program for many years. This has included a number of visits by teacher delegations from Norway, twinning arrangements between schools where exchange visits of students and teachers have taken place both ways, exchanges of letters and drawings and so on, and support in the form of school materials to the Nicaraguan schools.

FADCANIC is also an important partner for SAIH in other respects. The Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast is a complex and highly politicized arena where detailed local knowledge is necessary in order to avoid missteps. FADCANIC is an important source of information for SAIH in keeping abreast of developments.

Furthermore, both in terms of facilitating exchange activities with Norwegian teachers, and of participating in information activities when representatives have been visiting Norway, FADCANIC has played an important

role in inspiring and informing solidarity activities and international understanding in Norway – primarily among the SAIH membership base.

Still, both SAIH and FADCANIC representatives have emphasized that the full potential of the relationship has not yet been realized. It is possible to envision both a stronger role of Norwegian educators in advisory and investigative functions related to the program activities, as well as forms of South-South-exchange, for instance linking the FADCANIC program with similar teacher training initiatives SAIH supports in Bolivia.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Design and execution of the program

4.1.1 Highly relevant program

The program has identified a critical element in terms improving education in the region, namely teacher training, and designed interventions that efficiently target this problem area.

Moreover, within the framework of Education For All initiatives, there has been a tendency to give priority to programs of extending school *coverage*, while programs to improve the *quality* of education have been fewer. The present program meets the challenge of designing efficient interventions to improve quality of education.

In sum, this is a well-conceived and highly relevant program.

4.1.2 Exemplary case of cooperation between state and civil society institutions

The program demonstrates a fruitful form of cooperation between state institutions and an NGO. The NGO identifies a critical problem in the education sector, and efficiently and flexibly solves the logistical and practical problems of addressing it, within the framework set by national curriculums and standards, and based on the teaching resources of the public teacher training college of Bluefields. The result is a program with many of the strengths often attributed to NGO projects – efficiency, flexibility, creativity – while at the same time achieving the kind of region-wide impacts more often associated with government interventions.

4.1.3 Well organized and efficiently executed program

While we have focused on the impact of the program, and paid less attention to organizational aspects, it is nevertheless worth pointing out that everything we have learnt points to a very solid organizational set-up of the program.

4.1.4 Flexibility and ability to adjust to overcome difficulties encountered

In implementing the program, FADCANIC has shown flexibility and creativity in overcoming the practical and logistical problems involved in such a complex program, thereby ensuring its efficient implementation.

4.1.5 Component of supervision has been important for ensuring the impact of the program

It is worth emphasizing the important role the component of supervision in the communities has had for achieving the project objectives. This has been important in order to reinforce what was taught in the short and highly intense courses, as well as in order to give support and inspiration to teachers working under difficult conditions and in areas where MECD lacks the resources to give such attention. The personal characteristics of the two supervisors employed by FADCANIC have undoubtedly contributed to the impacts of this component.

4.2 Direct impact: Problem of unqualified teachers

4.2.1 Reduction of unskilled teachers

By helping 265 teachers obtain their degrees, the program has had a real impact in terms of reducing the number of unskilled teachers in the RAAS. In addition, there is a number of teachers who are scheduled to graduate in January, and many of them will probably do so even if the FADCANIC support does not continue. In this way, the output of the program will be close to the original target of 337 teachers trained.

4.2.2 Low rate of desertion among the teachers trained through the FADCANIC program

Of the 265 teachers who have graduated through the program between 1997 and 2003, 92% are still employed in the educational sector on the Atlantic Coast. In a country with high rotation of the labor force in most sectors, this is an extremely high retention rate.

Out of these 92%, 15% no longer work in the primary schools, but have been 'promoted', to secondary schools or other positions within the MECD structure.

Thus, while 'desertion' of teachers – in search of better opportunities elsewhere – is a general problem for MECD, the figures show that the teachers trained through the FADCANIC program are much less prone to leave the sector.

4.2.3 External factors mean that problem is not reduced to the extent originally envisioned

The significant increase in the number of teachers employed by MECD in the region has implied the hiring of a great number of new unskilled teachers. Thus, while the original project goal was to reduce the level of unskilled teachers to 12%, the current level is reported to be around 50%.

4.2.4 Unequal geographical distribution of impact

For a number of reasons, the areas with easier access to Bluefields and Laguna de Perlas have benefited more from the program. The impact has been relatively smaller in the more distant areas.

4.3 Indirect impact: Quality of education

4.3.1 Significant impact in terms of improving quality of education

The program has targeted a critical aspect in terms of improving the quality of primary education in the RAAS, namely teacher skills. Teachers' performance has improved in the following ways:

- Through the assimilation and application of new pedagogical methods
- Through improved knowledge and understanding of the subjects taught
- Through improved confidence and self-valorization among teachers, matched by increased respect from community
- Through awakened interest in continuing to expand their knowledge horizons, an indication of which is the number of teachers who continue with further university studies in their spare time

Teachers also assume new roles in the community, as is evidenced for instance by the dominance of teachers on the community council (*junta directiva comunitaria*) in Rama Key or the election of a teacher as mayor in Kukra Hill.

4.3.2 On the other hand, a number of limitations continue to exist, both related to the program and to external factors

4.3.2.1 Not all teachers have assimilated what was taught in the courses to the same degree

The courses are very intensive, compressing the curriculum of a whole year into two periods totaling around 6 weeks. Moreover, practical issues related to the need to bring children to the courses and attend to health matters detract time from studies. While generally the students of these courses have been highly motivated and dedicated, not all have been able to get the most out of such a difficult study situation.

In order to ameliorate these problems, the follow-up and supervision of teachers in their communities in the periods between the courses has been vital. As MECD has only had the capacity to ensure this for a minority of schools (in the municipal capitals, as well as for certain 'model schools' that receive additional funds, mainly the bilingual schools), the follow-up component of the program has been of fundamental importance.

4.3.2.2 Specific issues related to education in the zone merit increased attention

4.3.2.2.1 Bilingual education

Having been obliged to use the national curriculum for teacher training, the courses have not really prepared the teachers for the challenges involved in bilingual education.

Currently, the MECD, URACCAN, a coalition of civil society organizations and the Escuela Normal of Bluefields are developing a new curriculum for bilingual teachers. This should hopefully improve this aspect for the future.

The fact that many of the teachers are not sufficiently fluent in both languages is a serious obstacle to a well-functioning bilingual education. This problem cannot be adequately addressed within the framework of the short and intense courses.

4.3.2.2.2 Multigrade teaching

While a large number of teachers work with multigrade classes, the ways of dealing with the additional challenges this implies seem to be only superficially dealt with in the courses.

4.3.2.2.3 Teaching the basic skill of reading

It was found that a large number of pupils in the primary schools did not learn this fundamental skill properly in the early grades. This leads to difficulties in other disciplines and later grades. An increased focus in the courses on this aspect would therefore seem warranted.

4.3.2.3 There is a great shortage of background material for the teachers to consult when preparing their classes.

Shortage of reference material in schools is a general problem of the zone, and directly impacts on teachers' ability to offer a quality education.

The project has tried to address the problem to some extent, giving teachers in the courses some materials to take to their schools. Still, the problem remains a serious limitation.

4.3.2.4 Teacher absence from classes is a problem in some communities.

There may be different reasons for this, related for instance to teachers holding leadership positions that take part of their time and sometimes imply travel; to own studies (in night or Saturday classes) that require homework; to the economic necessities of attending to other income-generating activities; to a lack of work discipline in some schools; or to de-motivation due to general difficult work conditions, lack of attention from MECD, lack of support from parents and community and low level of pay.

4.3.2.5 Lack of material and infrastructure in schools

Textbooks and all kinds of educational material are in short supply in most schools.

Many school buildings are inadequate and run-down, and chairs and other equipment deficient or lacking.

In some places, the situation is slightly better due to the support from specific projects or programs. Most of the bilingual schools receive this kind of help.

In general this situation deteriorates as one moves away from the regional capital of Bluefields (mirroring the national situation of gradual decline of physical and material conditions in the schools as one moves out from Managua).

4.3.2.6 The quality of education is also affected by a number of contextual factors

The economic situation makes school payments difficult for many, and is the direct cause of drop-out among many students. Problems of drugs, alcohol, early pregnancies and prostitution are widespread among youth in many communities, and also result in desertions from school.

In many instances the degree of cooperation between teachers and parents was found to be low. Many teachers complained about a lack of concern for the children's education among parents, leading to problems of non-attendance, failure to do homework and drop-outs. This lack of concern among some seems to be related to low educational levels and difficult economic conditions.

There are also general complaints of breakdown of respect for traditional authority structures that affect discipline and the functioning of the schools.

4.4 Gender aspects

In all the communities we visited it was found that girls did better in school and continued studying to higher levels than boys did. This gender difference is also reflected in the composition of students in the teacher training courses, where women outnumber men by two to one. Figures for the region as a whole show that there is a large under-representation of boys at the secondary school level.

Boys drop out of school both because they to a greater extent start working early, and because they are more prone enter into problems with to drug and alcohol abuse. Cultural factors related to masculine identity may also promote disinterest and lead to lower academic achievements.

The high drop-out rate among boys is problematic as it is very directly linked to the drug and alcohol problem. Furthermore, it may reproduce traditional Nicaraguan gender patterns where males tend to back out of responsibilities. Making schools more attractive to boys would therefore seem to be an important objective.

4.5 The FADCANIC – SAIH relationship

SAIH has a longstanding commitment to the Atlantic Coast and to the autonomy project. The organization has showed flexibility and willingness to listen in its cooperation with FADCANIC. As a students' and academics' organization with a strategic focus on education, the Norwegian NGO is an important dialogue partner for FADCANIC when it comes to developing and implementing educational projects.

FADCANIC has been an extremely well-organized partner for SAIH, complying with all technical and bureaucratic requirements of international development cooperation. These factors have led to a cooperation based on a

high level of mutual trust, thereby promoting an open dialogue and minimizing many of the structural difficulties inherent in any donor-recipient-relationship.

Spin-off effects and complementary activities have developed around the concrete project cooperation. FADCANIC was a central actor behind the establishment of the URACCAN University on the Atlantic Coast, and SAIH was both dialogue partner and donor in this process. Moreover, a number of exchange- and twinning activities between Norwegian and Atlantic Coast teachers and schools have developed around the SAIH-FADCANIC relationship.

FADCANIC has been important for SAIH in terms of serving as a source of contextual knowledge important for all of SAIH's work on the Atlantic Coast. Furthermore, through visits to Norway, key persons of FADCANIC have served to spread awareness of the complexities of the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast in Norway and to inspire the SAIH membership's international solidarity engagement.

Still, both SAIH and FADCANIC representatives have emphasized that the full potential of the relationship has not yet been realized. It is possible to envision both a stronger role of Norwegian educators in advisory and investigative functions related to program activities, as well as forms of South-South-exchange, for instance linking the FADCANIC program with similar teacher training initiatives supported by SAIH in Bolivia.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Continue the program

The program has targeted a critical element for raising the quality of education in the region, and has had a significant impact in terms of reducing the problem of unqualified teachers. Still, because of population growth and extension in number of teachers and coverage of schools, new teachers without degrees are continuously being hired. There is therefore a need for a continuation of a program of this type. We recommend that SAIH and FADCANIC cooperate on a new program phase.

5.2 Extend the new phase

In order to ensure the greatest possible impact of a new program phase, there is need for medium-term time perspective. The original discussions between SAIH and FADCANIC on a possible new phase have suggested a three year time frame. In practice, this would mean that only those teachers who lack three years or less of schooling in order to graduate would be eligible. Undoubtedly, there is a significant number of such teachers who would thereby be aided in obtaining their degrees. However, there are also many potential candidates who would not qualify. Moreover, the majority of this latter group is to be found in the more distant communities – where educational levels are lower; where the program up to now has had relatively less impact; and where schools face the greatest problems, in terms of teacher qualifications, of supervision and all kinds of educational materials, and of multi-grade classes. Thus, for the new phase to have maximum impact, also in those areas where the needs are greatest, it is necessary to think in a time perspective that will allow all teachers to obtain their degree.

Ideally, this means thinking in a seven year perspective. This would allow an initial course that would allow those teachers who have not completed primary school to do this. Furthermore, it would give one year's leeway in addition to the five years stipulated to obtain the teacher degree. This will allow for the inevitable delays in study progression that some participants in a program like this will experience, whether due to pregnancies, illnesses, or for other reasons.

Possibly, SAIH will be unable to commit itself to a project period of seven years. If this should be so, then we would like to point out that any extension of the discussed three years – for instance to five years – would improve the potential impact of the program. Thus we urge SAIH to consider what is possible in this respect.

5.3 Strengthen component of supervision

As we have argued, the component of supervision in the communities has been of central importance for the positive impacts of the program. It is

therefore important that this component also be continued. Ideally it ought to be strengthened so that more visits could be made to the more inaccessible communities, preferably by a larger team with different specialists. In addition to the three themes indicated below – bilingual education, multigrade teaching and teaching to read – it would seem useful to include someone with special competence related to the pedagogy of mathematics and the natural sciences, often a weak area in Nicaraguan schools. In those schools that receive extra support and supervision from MECD because of particular projects – largely the bilingual schools – the program can reduce the level of attention.

Travel to these distant communities is cumbersome and costly, and we are aware that this recommendation may be hard to follow-up in practice. FADCANIC (and SAIH) must evaluate the cost-efficiency of strengthening this component.

5.4 Strengthen component of facilitating teacher materials

Schools (with the exception of ‘model schools’, largely bilingual, that receive extra support) lack all kinds of materials, and the physical infrastructure is deficient. FADCANIC cannot address this problem in its totality. But there is one aspect of it that is intimately related to teacher training, and that is the facilitation of teacher reference and background material. Distributing such material to students in the courses will both aid their learning and help them translate this learning into improved practice in their work in the schools.

There has been some support for this in the project up to now. However, needs in this respect are great, and given the availability of funds to strengthen this component, we would strongly recommend that this be done.

5.5 Strengthen teacher training on key issues

Within the courses, we think certain modifications in contents might strengthen the focus on some of the central challenges the teachers in the region face. In part, this would imply modifications of the existing national study plans and curricula – such as is already being developed for the degree of ‘bilingual teacher’. But there should also be room to accommodate some changes in the courses within the existing national frameworks. The key areas to address are the following.

- Bilingual education
- Multigrade teaching
- Teaching to read

In terms of bilingual education, we do not presume to come with any recommendations except that the FADCANIC program ought to do its utmost to ensure that the participants in the new phase all benefit from the curriculum development now taking place. Thus, also for those teachers who only need one, two or three years of courses, one should attempt to make sure that this will include a focus on bilingual education – even if their previous study

years have not included this focus, and curricula and study plans for these years are only planned to be developed at a later stage.

With respect to multigrade teaching, it is recommended that the theme is taken up not only late in the studies, but at different times, and that it is given more weight than one single class.

Even though it is clear that teaching to read is a crucial aspect in need of strengthening, we have no recommendations as to how this should be done. It could be useful to make a short study of the methodologies actually being used by teachers in the region, and assess their strengths and weaknesses. Particular emphasis should be paid to whether different methodologies may be required for teaching to read in different languages. On the basis of such a study, one could more easily decide how this theme could be strengthened within the overall framework of the teacher training courses.

Appendix 1: Proposed Terms of Reference

TERMINOS DE REFERENCIA CONTRATACIÓN DE CONSULTORIA PARA LA EVALUACIÓN DE IMPACTO DEL PROGRAMA DE PROFESIONALIZACIÓN MAGISTERIAL EN LA RAAS.

I. INTRODUCCIÓN.

La Fundación para la Autonomía y el Desarrollo de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua (FADCANIC) ejecuta en la Región Autónoma del Atlántico Sur (RAAS) el proyecto denominado “*Programa de Profesionalización Magisterial en la RAAS*”, en coordinación con el Ministerio de Educación Cultural y Deporte de la RAAS y de la Escuela Normal de Bluefields y bajo el auspicio de la Agencia de Cooperación Noruega (SAIH).

El Programa tiene como objetivo: elevar el nivel profesional de los maestros de la Región Autónoma del Atlántico Sur (RAAS), y contribuir de esta manera al mejoramiento de la calidad de la educación de los estudiantes de esta región, en particular en los del nivel correspondiente a la educación primaria.

El Programa se inició en la RAAS en Enero de 1997, teniendo como núcleos de estudio los municipios de Bluefields y Laguna de Perlas. Se trata de un Programa cuya duración ha sido de siete (7) años, aprovechando el tiempo de las vacaciones escolares para capacitar a los maestros empíricos de la RAAS, con el propósito de tecnificar y calificar profesionalmente con sus respectivos diplomas y títulos a los maestros(as) de primaria. Hasta la fecha se han realizado trece encuentros de Profesionalización Magisterial.

Dos (2) especialistas metodólogas han dado seguimiento a los maestros en las comunidades durante el año escolar, para reforzar en la práctica el aprendizaje de los mismos, contando cada uno de ellos y ellas, con el material bibliográfico requeridos para las consultas necesarias según temas en discusión y desarrollo.

FADCANIC y SAIH han consensuado la realización de una evaluación de impacto del Programa, con la finalidad de conocer, interpretar y analizar la situación e impacto del proyecto durante el período de ejecución de actividades correspondientes al período desde 1997 hasta la fecha. Por la particularidad del Programa, la evaluación de impacto, abordará elementos de tipo educativo, de formación técnico-profesional, de procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje, metodologías, de medios didácticos y audiovisuales, aspectos culturales y socioeconómicos de los grupos meta atendidos por el Programa; así mismo, se incluyen aspectos evaluativos relacionados con la organización administrativa del Programa, el impacto del mismo en las comunidades,

los municipios y la región Autónoma Atlántico Sur y el costo-beneficio del mismo.

Esta evaluación de impacto, comprende, además de un análisis pormenorizado de la experiencia acumulada, el comportamiento y productividad de los distintos componentes que integran el Programa y el resultado de los mismos. De igual manera, se plantea la necesidad de realizar las valoraciones pertinentes sobre el grado de apropiación y/o empoderamiento del Programa por parte de los beneficiarios directos, así como del acompañamiento de FADCANIC y el rol de SAIH, MECD y la Escuela Normal de Bluefields.

II. ANTECEDENTES.

Con fecha 24 de Septiembre de 1996 SAIH Noruega aprobó financiamiento para el desarrollo del proyecto: "**Profesionalización Magisterial a Maestros Empíricos de la Región Autónoma Atlántico Sur**". Dicho proyecto tenía como objetivo: Contribuir a reducir el nivel de empirismo entre los maestros de educación primaria de la **R.A.A.S.**, para el mejoramiento del proceso de enseñanza/aprendizaje.

Debido a la naturaleza del funcionamiento del sistema educativo en Nicaragua, los cursos o encuentros, se imparte en una modalidad intensiva, durante dos períodos de vacaciones de los maestros: en Enero y Julio durante los cuales se tienen programados recesos de 2 meses y 15 días respectivamente.

El primer encuentro con financiamiento del proyecto inició en Enero de 1997. Dadas la características multiétnicas y multilingües de la Región, se implementaron dos núcleos o centros de capacitación: uno ubicado en Laguna de Perlas y otro en Bluefields. A partir de ese año 1997 al 2002, se han desarrollado trece (13) encuentros de profesionalización

El programa tiene un impacto importante en reducir el nivel del empirismo de los maestros(as) en la RAAS, sobretodo en la educación primaria. Esto implica una mejora tanto en la pedagogía y la forma de enseñanza como en el contenido de las clases que se imparten, bajo una estricta supervisión. Aunque formalmente el empirismo solo se reduciría al concluir el programa, después de que los estudiantes reciben sus títulos. En la práctica la enseñanza que adquieren estos maestros(as) se va utilizando de inmediato en sus cursos.

El título de "**Maestros de Educación Primaria**" es un factor de motivación para las y los egresados de la Escuela Normal, porque a pesar del bajo salario devengado, garantiza las posibilidades de continuar estudios superiores y /o ser promovidos a cargos superiores en el Ministerio de Educación y /o la comunidad.

Otro impacto importante es elevar el nivel de capacidad del personal en estas instituciones.

A nivel del beneficiario individual, también hay un impacto en forma de mejor competitividad y remuneración en el mercado de trabajo.

Se observa que muchos maestros graduados han abandonado el magisterio por los bajos salarios que actualmente reciben por parte del Ministerio de Educación (el equivalente a unos U\$ 50.00 dólares por mes en primaria), por lo que el Programa ha graduado a maestros que hoy son directores de escue-

las, delegados municipales de educación (uno de los cargos más importantes del sector educativo). Otros son miembros de los Consejos Municipales, del Consejo Supremo Electoral y del Consejo Regional (máxima autoridad política de la Región). También, hay graduados que son Alcaldes (como el caso de Kukra Hill); y otros se encuentran trabajando en organismos de la sociedad civil, la iniciativa privada y algunas instancias gubernamentales de la región. De igual manera nos encontramos con graduados que han emigrado hacia el interior del país y el extranjero. Algunos maestros que se han graduados a través del Programa han sido contratados para trabajar en la educación secundaria. Otros maestros han optado por continuar en la universidad con el fin de alcanzar su título al nivel de licenciatura.

Por su parte, el Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deportes (MECD), para llenar las vacantes que requieren o demandan los centros escolares en la región, ha continuado contratando nuevos maestros empíricos. Además, producto del incremento anual de la población estudiantil y de las limitaciones presupuestarias del MECD, en ciertos casos los padres de familia han contratado también a maestros empíricos de ambos sexos, para que sus hijos puedan recibir la educación primaria básica. Todo esto tiene que ver con el incremento estudiantil que cada año ocurre en la región; por ejemplo, la matrícula escolar en 1997 fue de 21,775 alumnos y para el 2002 este mismo indicador nos presenta una cifra de 29,104 alumnos.

El programa contempla como componente principal los encuentros de profesionalización, no obstante el componente de **supervisión** por parte de la metodólogas para dar seguimiento a la planificación, métodos, pedagogía y la forma que se están implementando en la práctica los conocimientos adquiridos para reforzar en la práctica, ha jugado un papel muy importante en la calidad del proceso enseñanza aprendizaje

III. OBJETIVOS DE IMPACTO.

- Interpretar, analizar y evaluar la situación actual del Programa de Profesionalización en la RAAS, y medir el impacto del mismo en el sector educativo y en las condiciones de vida técnica-profesional de los maestros.
- Analizar y evaluar la participación de los beneficiarios del Programa, y la apropiación de los objetivos generales y específicos del Programa por parte de los beneficiarios, así como el grado de participación de los beneficiarios en la ejecución de los componentes y distintas fases del Programa.
- Hacer las recomendaciones y propuestas específicas para potenciar y optimizar el trabajo integral del Programa, el de FADCANIC, la Escuela Normal y el de SAIH, identificando las acciones pertinentes a realizar según los resultados de la evaluación externa para asegurar la continuidad y sostenibilidad del Programa.

IV. PLAN DE TRABAJO DE LA CONSULTORIA.

La ejecución de todo el proceso de consultoría contempla la elaboración de los instrumentos técnico-metodológicos para cada una de las fases de la misma, que incluye los procedimientos, organización, contenido y dinámica de trabajo, el plan de trabajo, cronograma de actividades estructura de los documentos finales. Estas actividades serán programadas en un periodo no mayor de seis semanas

1. Fase I: Instalación y preparativos previos.

- Firma de contrato.
- Reunión de consenso con FADCANIC y SAIH.
- Preparación de plan de trabajo (consenso y aprobación).
- Recopilación de la información disponible con los actores del Programa.
- Investigación documental de las diferentes etapas del Programa.

2. Fase II: Trabajo de campo.

- Visita a la RAAS, a los municipios de La Cruz de Río Grande, Desembocadura del Río Grande, Tortuguero, Laguna e perlas, Kukra Hill, Bluefields, y Bocana de Paiwas.
- Entrevistas individuales a informantes claves (que conocen y dominan el comportamiento global y particular del Programa: actores claves, instituciones públicas y privadas, autoridades municipales y comunitarias).
- Entrevistas grupos focales (informantes claves se refiere a los maestros beneficiados por el Programa, maestros empíricos que participan actualmente en el Programa, directores de centros escolares, líderes comunitarios).

3. Fase III: Trabajo de gabinete y taller.

- Elaboración de primer borrador de Impacto (se utilizará la síntesis de cada etapa del Programa analizada), con sus conclusiones y recomendaciones.
- Interpretación, análisis y sistematización de la información (permitirá valorar los distintos niveles de apropiación del Programa, las expectativas de los actores del Programa y las prioridades del mismo).
- Realización de taller de retroalimentación con todo el personal técnico y administrativo del Programa, personas notables que contribuyen con el Programa (SAIH, FADCANIC, Escuela Normal), utilizando el primer borrador de evaluación externa (análisis de la información recopilada, discusión y aportes de consideraciones generales que puedan ser incorporadas al Documento Final).

4. Fase IV: Documento Final.

- Preparación del Documento Final de Impacto.
- Presentación y aprobación del Documento Final.
- Preparación de un documento resumen, para su publicación en la revista "Wani"
- Entrega del Documento Final.

V. RESULTADOS-PRODUCTOS DE LA EVALUACIÓN.

Según los objetivos de la evaluación externa, se deben presentar los resultados de la misma en forma de producto con evidencias precisas y claras, con los detalles necesarios sobre el nivel de cumplimiento por resultado esperado del Programa, de la siguiente manera:

1. Un Documento: conteniendo un análisis de la experiencia desarrollada por FADCANIC, la Escuela Normal, MECD, SAIH, los maestros, los municipios y comunidades favorecidas por el Programa. Además, incluye el grado de apropiación del Programa y sus componentes y objetivos, por parte de los maestros, autoridades locales y comunitarias; las metodologías aplicadas, procedimientos e instrumentos de evaluación, monitoreo y supervisión utilizados durante la ejecución del Programa.
2. Un Documento Final: preparación de un Informe Final cuyo contenido se refiera al análisis de resultados y a las recomendaciones y propuestas sobre la ejecución del Programa. El Informe Final de la evaluación de impacto debe ser vinculado también al desarrollo del Plan Nacional de Educación para todos los niveles y el impacto del mismo en la región, municipios y comunidades beneficiadas.
3. Un documento resumen, no mayor de 12 páginas conteniendo los principales hallazgos de la evaluación de impacto para ser publicado en la revista autóctona “WANI”

VI. ALCANCE DE LA EVALUACIÓN DE IMPACTO.

Los ejes de la evaluación serán los siguientes:

- La relación entre los resultados alcanzados con los esperados según Planes Operativos Anuales (*Efectividad*: componentes del proyecto, gestión, operación, auspiciamiento, educación, organización y comunidad).
- La relación entre los recursos asignados y utilizados con los logros y resultados (*Eficiencia*).
- Nivel de apropiación del Programa por parte de los beneficiarios (*Empoderamiento*).
- Participación de la mujer en el Programa y sus componentes y acciones respectivas (*Enfoque de Género*).
- Impacto del Programa en la región, municipios y comunidades (*Impacto en Sector Educativo y Entorno*).
- El nivel de impacto en los aspectos cualitativos como efecto de los agentes de cambio (positivos o negativos) en las relaciones: maestro-MECD, maestro-alumno, maestro-comunidad, maestro-maestro, maestro-sector educativo, maestro-familia, maestro-economía, maestro femenino-maestro masculino (*Agente de Cambios*).
- Obtención y aprendizaje de experiencias acumuladas en el Programa (*Lecciones Aprendidas – Intercambios de Experiencias*).
- Preparar y entregar información cualitativa y cuantitativa suficiente y aceptable, recopiladas en los territorios del Programa como elementos de juicios para expresar y afirmar contenidos y opiniones independientes

sobre el Programa, sus acciones y sus logros y resultados (*Informe Final*).

- Publicación en una de la revistas locales (Wani) de los principales hallazgos de la evaluación de impacto (*Publicidad del proyecto*)
- Perspectivas de continuidad del Programa en la región y la *Sostenibilidad del mismo*.

VII. METODOLOGÍA

Se contratará un consultor externo y uno local, para realizar el Impacto, quienes tomarán en consideración los ejes principales de la consultoría y el plan y cronograma de trabajo de acuerdo a los Planes Operativos Anuales del Programa. El consultor externo será seleccionado por SAIH y el local por FADCANIC.

Los consultores deben aplicar una metodología de trabajo que refleje con precisión el impacto del Programa en los territorios comprendidos por el mismo, tomando en consideración en la evaluación los cambios producidos por cualquier causa externa ajena a los propósitos originales del Programa.

La evaluación de impacto se realizará en un período de seis semanas (1 mes/días hábiles), de manera que, los consultores deberán presentar al inicio un plan de trabajo y cronograma de actividades, así como la metodología e instrumentos específicos que se implementarán para realizar la evaluación externa.

Para la realización de la evaluación se contempla la visita de los consultores tanto a los grupos metas del proyecto como a instituciones que tienen presencia en los territorios del Programa y que tengan relación muy estrecha con los objetivos del mismo (MECD, alcaldías, ONGs, Asociaciones Gremiales), y con otras organizaciones propias de las comunidades (comités comunales, comité de padres de familia).

Para el trabajo de campo se recomienda las entrevistas individuales y colectivas a informantes claves (individual y grupos focales).

Se pondrá a disposición del consultor los siguientes documentos: Proyecto-Programa Oficial, Planes Operativos Aprobados, Informes de Avance (narrativos y financieros), Memorias (de seminarios, talleres, encuentros, visitas de campo, supervisiones, monitoreos, etc.), Diagnósticos, Volumen de ingresos y egresos.

FADCANIC apoyará a los consultores en la preparación de los planes de viaje y la concertación de visitas institucionales y de campo, así como disponer del medio de transporte acuático, debiendo correr por cuenta de SAIH los gastos de operación de la panga.

Durante el período de la evaluación la consultoría presentará un informe borrador en español para fines de discusión e incorporar los comentarios que tanto FADCANIC como SAIH, estimen conveniente realizar. Posterior a la incorporación de los comentarios si los hubiere, los consultores presentarán un Informe Final escrito en Inglés, Noruego y Español, en dos originales, uno para cada institución (FADCANIC y SAIH).

El Informe Final deberá contener un sumario ejecutivo de no más de 8 páginas y un texto principal incluyendo los anexos. El Informe debe incluir como anexo la lista de las instituciones y personas entrevistadas, los sitios

visitados y los documentos consultados. Ambos documentos serán igualmente entregados en diskette en versión Microsoft Word.

En resumen, la evaluación de impacto deberá sustentarse en la realización práctica de todas aquellas acciones participativas que involucren a los diferentes actores del Programa. De tal manera, que los análisis, las interpretaciones, las conclusiones y recomendaciones sean el producto de la reflexión colectiva.

VIII. DURACIÓN Y LOCALIZACIÓN DE LA CONSULTORIA.

La Consultoría de Impacto del Programa de Profesionalización de la RAAS será preparada en un tiempo no menor de seis semanas calendario, tiempo que será distribuido en el cronograma de actividades con sus respectivas metodologías de trabajo según acciones a ejecutar.

La consultoría de Impacto se realizará principalmente en el territorio donde se ejecuta el Programa de Profesionalización de la RAAS (Bluefields, Kukra Hill, Laguna de Perlas, Tortuguero, La Cruz de Ría Grande, Desembocadura del Río Grande y Bocana de Paiwas), más el apoyo que brindarán las oficinas de FADCANIC y SAIH.

IX. REQUISITOS DEL CONSULTOR.

El Consultor deberá llenar los siguientes requisitos: profesional universitario, con amplia experiencia en evaluación y análisis de proyectos económicos y sociales, conocimiento y dominio de los asuntos de la Costa Caribe de Nicaragua, incluyendo trabajos relacionados con la formación de maestros y alumnos de los diferentes niveles educativos. Complementariamente se tomará en consideración toda experiencia en evaluación relacionada con el enfoque de género.

Los consultores evaluadores deberán hacerse acompañar de su respectivo curriculum vitae y de los soportes necesarios que certifiquen el contenido académico y laboral del mismo.

Appendix 2: People interviewed

Norway:

- 20.08.03 Odd-Kjetil Johannesen, project coordinator SAIH
22.08.03 Ragnhild Therese Nordvik Valverde, project coordinator SAIH
27.08.03 Roy Krøvel, former project coordinator SAIH (interviewed by phone)
28.08.03 Trond Berget, former project coordinator SAIH

Managua:

- 02.09.03 Alicia Slate, education advisor USAID Nicaragua, formerly FADCANIC coordinator for teacher training program

Bluefields:

- 03.09.03 Zoila Connolly, responsible for bilingual education, MECD RAAS
03.09.03 Group interview with nine teachers who had given classes in the courses, Escuela Normal Rigoberto Cabezas
03.09.03 Angélica Brown, coordinator for Base II program
03.09.03 Mary Ann Simmons, director Horacio Hodgson school, former administrative secretary and teacher in courses
03.09.03 Grace Gordon, supervisor bilingual education, MECD RAAS

El Bluff:

- 04.09.03 Roxanne Connolly, primary school teacher, graduate from FADCANIC courses
04.09.03 Griselda Baltodano, director primary school, graduate
04.09.03 Anibal Romero, primary school teacher, student in FADCANIC courses
04.09.03 Lila Perez Montalban, sub-director primary school, graduate
04.09.03 Mother with two children in school
04.09.03 Estefanie Sinclair, graduate of courses, now working as book seller in Costa Rica
04.09.03 Evalee Hansack, teacher in private primary school, course student
04.09.03 Elsa Sinclair, owner private primary school

Rama Key:

- 05.09.03 Anthony Oscar Omeir, primary school teacher
05.09.03 Howard Cliff McCrea Urbina, primary school teacher, course student
05.09.03 Susana Candida McCrea Ruíz, pre-school teacher, graduate
05.09.03 Martina Thomas, primary school teacher, graduate

- 05.09.03 Sebastian McCrea, primary school teacher, graduate
- 05.09.03 Cleveland McCrea, priest, Moravian church
- 05.09.03 Gerry McCrea, father, four children in school
- 05.09.03 McCrea, mother, 3 children in school

Bluefields:

- 06.09.03 Amanda Zelaya, sub-director Escuela Normal, coordinator of teacher training courses
- 06.09.03 Zaida Cardoso, MECD regional delegate RAAS
- 06.09.03 Aguida Antonio, MECD municipal delegate Laguna de Perlas

Kukra Hill:

- 08.09.03 Carlos Putschie Brown, MECD municipal delegate
- 08.09.03 Noelia Powell, MECD municipal supervisor (técnica), graduate
- 08.09.03 Teofilio Gutierrez, primary school teacher, graduate
- 08.09.03 Leolin Lackgood, sub-director primary school
- 08.09.03 Mother, two children in school
- 08.09.03 René Martínez, vice-mayor, father two children in school
- 08.09.03 Mirna Villalta, mayor, graduate form courses

Asentamiento Samuel Lau

- 09.09.03 Paula Parales, primary school teacher, responsible for school, graduate
- 09.09.03 Julio Alemán, primary school teacher
- 09.09.03 Melania González, mother, two children in school

Kukra Hill:

- 09.09.03 Domingo Truesdale, Ayuda en Acción
- Rosa Alvarado, Ayuda en Acción

Laguna de Perlas:

- 09.09.03 Hazel Wilson, FADCANIC, supervisor for community schools, teacher in courses
- 10.09.03 Nolma Downs, director primary school, graduate
- 10.09.03 Golda May Sambola, primary school teacher, course student
- 10.09.03 Roberta Romero, primary school teacher
- 10.09.03 Celestina Hebbert, primary school teacher
- 10.09.03 Lidia McCoy, primary school teacher, graduate, responsible resource center and teacher FADCANIC private primary school
- 10.09.03 Pamela Lewis Bloomfield, mother, three children in school
- 10.09.03 Lucilla Bloomfield, grandmother, many grandchildren in school, human rights activist
- 10.09.03 Emsworth Fox, municipal environmental officer

Haulover:

- 11.09.03 Elsa Pinera, FADCANIC preschool teacher, graduate

11.09.03 Constantino Humphries, director primary school, graduate
 11.09.03 Narciso Arteta, primary school teacher, graduate
 11.09.03 Arlene Hooker, mother, three children in school
 11.09.03 Angela Nickins, mother, five children

Laguna de Perlas:

11.09.03 Gerda Benliss, secondary school teacher

Tasbapounie:

12.09.03 Alma Carlos, director, secondary school
 12.09.03 Fluvia García, director primary school, graduate
 12.09.03 Beatriz Levy, primary school teacher, graduate
 12.09.03 Lineth, voluntary teacher secondary school
 12.09.03 Ernestina Pont Hodgson and husband, parents, four children
 in school

Orinoco:

13.09.03 Fermín González, director secondary school
 13.09.03 Erika Lewis, director, primary school, graduate
 Solomon Estrada, sub-director primary school
 13.09.03 Cristina Zenón Morales, primary school teacher, graduate
 13.09.03 Rosita Davis, primary school teacher, graduate
 13.09.03 Rebeca, mother, one child in school, nurse and pension
 owner
 13.09.03 Franny Zackaria Morales, primary school teacher Marshall
 Point, course student, mother one child in school Orinoco

Bluefields:

14.09.03 Ray Hooker, director FADCANIC

Managua:

16.09.03 Reidun Roald, advisor, Norwegian Embassy
 Felipe Rios Gamero, advisor, Norwegian Embassy

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