

Education: Impacting Lives and Society

Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- compare school environments between their school and Nicaraguan public schools.
 - predict problems/difficulties associated with these environments and their impact on society.
 - draw conclusions and suggest solutions to improve the educational system in Nicaragua.
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Materials (English/ Spanish)

- Photos depicting actual public & private schools in Nicaragua in 2002.
 - Student Handout: **Fact Sheet: Education and Society in Nicaragua**.
 - Student Handout: **Reflective Questions**.
 - Overhead projector, transparency, and overhead markers.
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Activities

1. Distribute a copy of the student handout entitled **Fact Sheet: Education and Society in Nicaragua** to each student.
 - a. Direct students to read fact sheet regarding education in Nicaragua.
 - b. Show the photos of different Nicaraguan public school classrooms.
 - c. Ask the students to make general observations about what they see.
 2. Group students in pairs or small groups.
 - a. Instruct students to make a list of at least 5 differences between their school and the Nicaraguan schools in the photos.
 - b. Encourage students to list striking differences, because duplicate responses will be eliminated during sharing.
 3. Ask each group to present their comparisons, eliminating those that have been mentioned by previous groups and asking students to add observations to their lists that they had not thought of in their own group.
 4. Distribute a copy of the student handout entitled **Reflective Questions** to each student. (This handout that will guide students to predict the impact of the Nicaraguan educational environment on the lives of the students and on society at large.)
 - a. Direct students to work in their groups again to develop thoughtful written responses to these questions. (Teachers may want to assign a few questions to each group.)
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- b. Have the students choose a spokesperson from each group to present their responses.
 - c. Allow for reaction from other groups after each presentation.
 - d. Guide students to create possible solutions to improve the educational system in Nicaragua. (Either the teacher or a designated student can summarize student solutions on an overhead transparency.)
 - e. Conduct a vote on the most feasible solutions and encourage students to explain the reasoning behind their choices.
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Fact Sheet: Education and Society in Nicaragua

Cost of Living Current monthly living expenses of a family with two children, calculated in US dollars (Costs taken from “Salario Minimo,” an article in the Nicaraguan newspaper *La Prensa* Summer, 2002).

Rent	\$120
Food	\$270
Clothing	\$ 15
Medicine	\$ 10
Education	\$ 10
Water and Light	\$ 15
Transportation	\$ 10
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Total	\$450

Yet, an average worker’s salary is approximately \$97 US a month! Teachers make approximately \$60 a month.

Education

- Illiteracy has grown in Nicaragua in the last years from 25.1% in '90 to 34% in '98.
- 1.7 million Nicaraguans have entered the 21st century without being able to read a book or write their names.
- More than 1/3 of the elementary schools are incomplete, offering only 3 or 4 grades.
- There are about 200,000 children between the ages of 7 and 12 that have no access to elementary education.
- In 1998, 47 out of every 100 school-age children did not attend school.
- Nicaragua has the lowest percentage of children who finish elementary schooling in Central America.
- A high percentage of minors work in the streets, in the fields, in industry, and in homes.
- In 1996, 20.02 % of children and adolescents between the ages of 10 and 18 were working.

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**Education
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- The principal reason that young children work is due to the poverty level of the family.
- Basic public school education costs 10 cordobas to register, and 5 cordobas per month.
- Children are required to have uniforms and new shoes in September. Notebooks, pencils, and school supplies are to be provided by families. (Exceptions may be made by specific schools.)
- Students attend school 5 ½ hours a day.
- Compulsory education is only to the sixth grade.
- Many classrooms are lacking in basic supplies and are crowded with 40-60 students. (This is the norm.)
- Uniforms cost \$5 U.S.
- Required consumable workbooks cost about 25 cordobas each, and 4 – 6 are required for each student each semester.
- Elementary school teachers must complete grade 6 then attend “teaching school” for secondary education. Secondary teachers must have a college education.
- Secondary schools are not accessible to many students—they are too far away and no transportation is provided.
- Only 25% of public school students who enter first grade finish the sixth grade.
- For every 1,000 students, only ten graduate from college.

Source

Oscar-René Vargas. *Nicaragua: después del Mitch . . . ¿qué?* Centro de Estudios de la Realidad de Nicaragua, 1999. pp. 99-100.

Reflective Questions

1. How is tourism affected by illiteracy?
2. How does inadequate education impact the labor force?
3. How can people hope to attain a higher standard of living with insufficient basic skills?
4. Why would it be difficult for students to work several hours after school each day?
5. How do these educational and employment factors contribute to the growing numbers of people who decide to leave the country?
6. What happens in the future to a country that loses a lot of its young citizens?

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7. How does living in poverty affect children's performance in school?

 8. What would motivate high school age students to want to pursue a career in education? What happens if there aren't enough teachers?

 9. What other problems might occur as a result of the desperate situations that so many families face?

 10. Given the fact that many people work hard for so little money, why would young people value education as a means of improving their future?
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1.



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3.



4.

