

Education in Post-Sandinista Nicaragua: A Case Study Approach

Objectives

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

- examine the role of education in Nicaraguan society.
 - explore the relationship between education and economic opportunity in Nicaragua.
 - contrast theory with practice with regard to education in Nicaragua.
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Materials

- Student Handout: **Educational Overview**
 - Student Handouts: **Photos**
 - Case Study #1
 - Case Study #2
 - Case Study #3
 - Case Study #4
 - Student Handouts: **Case Studies**
 - Case Study #1: Luis Sánchez
 - Case Study #2: Kaledonia Chebez
 - Case Study #3: Luis Antonio
 - Case Study #4: Francisco Alvarado
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Activities

1. Divide students into small groups. (Ideally, each group will have a different case study, though this may not be possible in larger classes.)
 - a. Distribute a copy of the student handout entitled **Educational Overview** to each student.
 - b. Direct students to read the handout and to compare educational opportunities in Nicaragua to those in the United States. How do they account for the differences?
 2. Distribute one of the **Photos** to each group.
 - a. Direct students to create a written profile of the person(s) in the picture in the context of his or her educational experience.
 - b. Explain that they should base their ideas on the picture and what they have read.
 - c. Ask each group to present their pictures and profiles to the class.
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**Activities
(continued)**

3. Distribute the **Case Studies**.
 - a. Instruct the groups to read their case study and to compare it to the profile they created.
 - b. Ask each group to present their pictures and case studies to the class, emphasizing the reality of the situations faced in the case study and how it compares to their initial profiles. What are the similarities and differences? How do you account for them?
4. Discuss the profiles and students' reactions, impressions, etc. as a whole class.

Teacher's Notes

- The case studies included in this lesson are the product of personal interviews conducted by the research team in Nicaragua.
 - This lesson may be modified for Spanish classes by providing translations of the case studies in the target language and conducting discussions partially or completely in the target language.
 - The following web site provides a detailed look at education during the Sandinista period:
[lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ni0036\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ni0036))
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Educational Overview

Education and Social Disparities in Nicaragua

In the United States, we view education as a basic right of all citizens, regardless of social position or socioeconomic status. This is our reality. In Nicaragua, as in many developing countries, the philosophy is similar, but the reality is often quite different.

In Nicaragua and throughout the world, education levels are directly related to social and economic development. Statistics indicate that nearly 70% of school-aged children in Nicaragua do not complete higher than a 4th grade education.

Despite more than a decade of democracy and subsequent opportunities for economic growth, Nicaragua continues to be among the poorest countries in the Western hemisphere. According to the *World Fact Book*, 50% of the population live in poverty, and 19% live in extreme poverty.

These conditions contribute greatly to the stark inequities among the social classes in Nicaragua. Despite such disparity, however, many of Nicaragua's poor and disadvantaged continue to value education and show a strong desire to educate their children.

The illiteracy rate in Nicaragua at the beginning of the 1980's was approximately 45%. During the period of the Sandinista government, educational programs and adult literacy campaigns contributed to the decline of that figure to 12.9%. Unfortunately, that rate could not sustain itself, and the illiteracy rate has risen significantly in recent years. It is currently estimated that almost one of every three Nicaraguans over the age of 15 is literate.



Case Study #1



Case Study #2



Case Study #3



Case Study #4

Case Study #1: Luis Sánchez

Luis Sánchez is 12 years old. He lives with his mother Connie and his sister Daniela in Leon, a small city about an hour from Managua. Luis attends a private school in Leon. He wears a uniform, as all students in Nicaragua do, and attends class from 7:00 to 11:45 each day. He enjoys playing soccer and baseball, and gets good grades. His mother, who holds a master's degree in accounting, manages a local restaurant. Luis wishes he could see her more. In order to send him and his sister to private schools, Connie works a double shift at the restaurant. She is gone when Luis gets up in the morning, and he goes to bed before she gets home. On Mondays, the one day per week his mother has off, Luis is in school. Connie works approximately 90 hours per week, and makes 3,200 cordobas a month, the equivalent of a little less than \$230 US dollars. Luis considers himself lucky, because many children his age can't go to school because their parents can't afford uniforms and materials. He hopes to go to college someday.

Case Study #2: Kaledonia Chebez

Kaledonia Chebez is 11 years old. She lives with her two sisters and her grandmother in a one-room house in Leon, a small city about an hour from Managua. The house has dirt floors, no windows and plenty of disease-carrying mosquitoes. Her grandmother, Isabel, is 78 years old. She washes clothes for a living, but she has no washing machine. She washes each item of clothing by hand in a small wash tub that sits outside of her very modest home. She makes less than one cordoba, about 7 cents, for each piece of clothing. She can't see well, so sometimes Kaledonia helps her. Kaledonia's father died when she was a baby, and her mother moved to Costa Rica to find work. Kaledonia and her sister Mauristania attend a private school near their home. Their younger sister Chela is 8 years old, but she has never gone to school. Her grandmother can't afford to send all three children on her salary of less than \$30 a month. Kaledonia and her sisters often beg for money from tourists to help pay the monthly fee for their school. If they get too far behind in their payments, they won't be permitted to attend.

Case Study #3: Luis Antonio

Antonio Calero is 16 years old, and has never gone to school. His parents' meager income doesn't provide enough money for luxuries like books, uniforms and school supplies. It often doesn't provide enough money to buy food and other necessities. A family friend taught Antonio to read, and he is proud to say he was able to teach his younger brothers, who have also never had any formal education. Antonio came to Granada from Managua in search of odd jobs. He plans to give the money he makes to his family to help them buy food. On a good day, he can make \$3.00. Antonio recently started attending a small school in Granada for disadvantaged and homeless children. The school, called Nueva Esperanza (New Hope), is operated by Donna, a woman from the United States. There, Antonio receives food, shelter and an opportunity to learn. Antonio's family may resist him staying at Nueva Esperanza, because he can make money for the family working on the streets. If that should happen, Donna will offer to pay the family or give them a weekly food ration in exchange for allowing Antonio to stay at the school.

Case Study #4: Francisco Alvarado

Francisco Alvarado is 13 years old. He lives with his mother, his father and his older brother near Managua. His father is a lawyer and the former minister of education in Nicaragua. He moved his family to the United States when the Sandinistas took power in 1979. Francisco was born there, but has lived most of his life in Nicaragua, where he returned with his family in the early 1990's. Francisco and his brother, José Antonio, attend the American School in Managua. The school's tuition is \$300 a month, higher than the average monthly wage of many Nicaraguan workers. When Francisco graduates, he will likely continue his education in the United States. His sister is studying art in Miami.
