

CASE STUDY 2

GUATEMALA

Towards an Inclusive Education System Inclusive School

Guatemala, December 2014

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1 Summary

The inclusive school is located in a municipality to the east of the department of Guatemala. The municipality has the characteristic of having a high human development index [0.742] (UNDP, 2011); total poverty is of 24% and extreme poverty of 2.3%. In terms of the population, this is the tenth most densely populated department of the country. Most of its inhabitants are Ladino and speak Spanish as their mother tongue; 3.8% are kaqchikel. 66.5% of the population lives in the urban area and the literacy rate is 91.7% (Municipal Development Plan, 2010). The education indicators show that the primary level has the largest coverage (106.4%), followed by pre-school (55%) and the basic secondary school cycle (46.4%). The challenge is the diversified high school cycle, which has coverage of 4.4% (UNDP, 2011). The population that attends or has attended the Inclusive School is characterized by its heterogeneity with respect to economic, social and family conditions. There are some for whom the economic factor is a limitation to study, there are others who need to work to be able to study, and there are yet others who can't continue studying because of their economic limitations. While there are some who fully enjoy their childhood, there are others who have joined gangs, become parents, contribute to the livelihood of the household and take care of their siblings. Some have the support of both parents, while others only of the mother, and yet others have no support from their family. Therefore, the Inclusive School responds to the most ample concept of inclusion, since it not only offers education services to students with special education needs with or without disabilities, but also to a very diverse group of students. An interesting finding was that, depending on the barriers addressed, these could turn into opportunities or remain as barriers. Below is a presentation of the findings made in this case study.

2 Introduction

This document has all the information on the study of case number two in Guatemala, research project on inclusive education in international cooperation –*refie*–, which was developed to learn about the perspectives of inclusion of the different stakeholders, both those that are part of the local education community (the principal, teachers, students, and mothers), but also external stakeholders of the chosen school (education authorities of the Departmental Education Direction –DIDEDUC–, government officers and local leaders). In addition, barriers and opportunities for inclusive education were identified as a critical strategy to bring education to all. Originally the idea was to carry out the investigation in four schools, but the team of national experts and the members of the international team recommended the inclusion in the sample of a school identified by the Direction General for Special Education –DIGEESP– of the Education Ministry –MINEDUC– as inclusive. According to DIGEESP (2012), an inclusive school is:

One that has no selection mechanisms or exercises no discrimination and which transforms its operations and pedagogical proposal to integrate the diversity of the student body, favouring social cohesion, which is one of the purposes of education. The participation of itinerant pedagogical advisors who provide accompaniment to the teachers at every level needs to be mentioned (p. 7).

Based on this, said direction provided a list of 32 schools registered as inclusive schools, noting those that stand out for their best practices on inclusion. This information allowed the national *refie* team to choose this school for the case study.

Below are the most important findings related to the context where the school is located, the school context, characteristics of the population, the different inclusion perspectives and the barriers and opportunities identified for each dimension: access, acceptance and participation



3 Description of the Context

The municipality where this case study was carried out is located on the Eastern part of the department of Guatemala. It is 1,752 meters over sea level and its normal temperature ranges from a maximum of 30°-31°C and a minimum of 10°-11°C. Total poverty is 24%, while extreme poverty is 2.3%. There is seasonal migration from other regions of the country to the rural area, from the rural area of the municipality to the municipal capital city, but the most common migration is from the municipality to the capital city (Municipal Development Plan, 2010). The municipal authorities described the municipality as a “*dormitory municipality*” since the majority of its inhabitants work outside and are present “*only at night*” and during the “*weekends*”. 68.62% live in blockhouses. There is one health center at the municipal capital city and health posts in two municipalities (Municipal Development Plan, 2010). Municipal authorities mentioned that the municipal city hall provides support on health issues with “*common*” funds to “*hire doctors, nurses, buy medicine*”. The human development index of this municipality is 0.742 (UNDP, 2011). Its main economic activity is agriculture. They also have a large production of cheese, cream, and butter. In addition, there has been an urban development growth (Municipal Development Plan, 2010). According to the municipal authorities, “*people from the capital city are moving to the townhouses*”. With respect to security, the municipality has a police station, located on the municipal capital city. Most of the crimes happen in the municipal capital city and in the quarter where the school object of this study is located. Crimes include: robberies at gunpoint, use of illegal weapons, extortions to stores and businesses, and use of substances. These areas are the ones that are more affected by the “*lack of police agents*” (Municipal Development Plan, 2010). Below is a description of the school context.

3.1 School Context

In the municipality, the primary level is the one with largest coverage (106.4%), followed by pre-school (55%), and basic secondary (46.4%). The diversified high school cycle has less coverage (4.4%) (UNDP, 2011). Municipal authorities mentioned that the municipality has school buildings in “*approximately 75 per cent*” and that in the last two and a half years investments have been made to improve them. According to the Municipal Development Plan (2010), the municipality has 145 establishments registered, of which 88% (127) are located in the rural area. The distribution of establishments by level and sector is shown in the following chart:

Table 1. Distribution of establishments by level and sector

Level	Total establishments	No. Establishments: public sector	%
Pre-School	41	24	59
Primary	54	33	61
Basic	33	17	52
Diversified	8	1	12.5

Source: Municipal Development Plan, 2010

The school principal mentioned that the area where the establishment is located is a “red zone”. He added that the “economic situation of the parents” forces both of them to work and “the children are left alone”, so they are out on the streets; “a lot of youngsters are out and don’t study”. He mentioned that in front of the school there “have been fights between former students” who are now members of gangs (groups of persons who engage in criminal activities). This is a public, mixed school that operates in the afternoons. According to the principal, there are 614 students, 534 of which attend primary school and 80 pre-school; in addition, he mentioned that there are 16 students with cerebral palsy and children with “autism, deafness and Down Syndrome”. The land where the school is located is broken and it can only be accessed through a dirt road. There are two school buildings; in one of them functions an institute by cooperative and the other one is the Inclusive School. The building of the latter has only one stage but given the geography of the land, it is built in two levels and access is by means of stairs. It has separate bathrooms for girls and boys; these are located far from the school building, which makes it harder for disabled students. In addition, the children mentioned that something they don’t like about their school is “the bathrooms, the children don’t flush and leave them dirty, so you don’t want to go in and you have to wait until you get home”. The following quote shows what a teacher said about the school infrastructure:

... we have physically disabled children here ... they can’t move ... as an adult even I find it (hard) this descent to access the school because it is all dirt road with stones, and when it rains there are more stones. And I think, if it is hard for me, how is it for those who need assistance? Going up and coming down is hard ... the other issue is going to the bathroom ... we have bathrooms back there, so maybe these are not life-and-death issues, but they do put their physical integrity at risk.

Teacher

The principal and the teachers mentioned their concern for the school backyard, which is being eroded by a wastewater river that flows there.

The boys and girls mentioned that in addition to learning and having teachers who understand and “explain well the subject matters”, they also like the school because it is “big, spacious, it is painted and there is a very old tree in the middle of the playground”. They mentioned that what they don’t like about the school are the stones, the dust and the fact that since there are no trashcans, “children throw their trash wherever ... and the school is always dirty”. With respect to the trash, a child mentioned that it represents a risk because if someone steps on it, they could fall or get hurt. The girls

don't like the court or the games because *"a lot of children have hurt themselves"*. It is a concrete court designed as an area to play basketball. Nevertheless, the boys and girls mentioned that they have been forbidden to play policemen and thieves (a game in which some are police agents and the others are thieves; the police agents try to catch the thieves. When they are caught, they are put in jail; they can be freed by the thieves who have not been caught. The game ends when all the thieves have been caught) or ball because there have been accidents in the past, like a boy who was *"the goalie, he slipped, fell, and broke an arm"*. So during recess, girls *"play with dolls, walk and talk"*, while boys *"play cards, tazos (round pieces with cartoon drawings) or walk"*. To help the discipline committee, during recess there are school patrols formed by boys and girls from different grades. They are in charge of supervising and deciding what games are allowed and which ones aren't. Finally, the girls mentioned that they would like more supervision to ensure that *"boys don't smoke, bring pot or alcohol"*, while the boys mentioned that they would like to have *"concrete classrooms instead of metal sheet ones"* and to have a *"wall in the entrance to stop the water from flowing into the school"*.

4 Characteristics of the Population

The estimated population for 2010 of the municipality of this case study was 67,700 inhabitants (INE, 2011), the majority of which are Ladino and speak Spanish as their mother tongue; 3.8% of the population is kaqchikel. 66.5% of the population lives in the urban area (Municipal Development Plan, 2010). The human development indicators show that the literacy rate for the municipality is 91.7% (INE, 2011).

Below is a description of the characteristics of the population according to both internal and external stakeholders. In most of the cases, the population described by the stakeholders attends school or did at some point. Most of the characteristics of the population can become barriers and/or opportunities for access, acceptance, and participation. Therefore, in this section, the characteristics are presented in general, since they are described in detail in each section related to the previously mentioned dimensions.

The DEDUC education authorities, the municipal authorities and the teachers made a distinction between urban and rural population. Below are the characteristics of each.

- Urban population: both parents work, which means that their children have nobody to look after them. Family disintegration results from intra-familial violence. There is also alcoholism. The parents are seen as absent, distant and not involved in the studies of their children. They don't supervise or support their children with their homework. When they are summoned, some go and others don't because the place where they work *"doesn't give them permission to come"* or they *"have no way of coming"* because they have *"to look after their younger kids"* and they have to take care of their house chores. They are seen as *"supervisors, not collaborators"*, they seem to be waiting to see what the teachers do. The image of the teacher *"has been perverted"* in the urban area.
- Rural population: fathers and mothers with no schooling or who studied up to 2nd or 3rd grade of primary school. Few have completed their primary education. There are gender differences with respect to education, *"men are given priority over women"*. Some people come from other regions of the country, which temporarily migrate to the municipality during coffee

harvest season. Their children, both men and women, work with their parents. These children are more vulnerable of dropping out from school. Women *“from a very young age have a boyfriend ... work at home ...”* Family disintegration results from the fact that the male figure migrates to the United States, so the children stay behind with their mothers. There is very little alcoholism. With respect to education, parents get involved and are present. They are seen as *“very respectful”* and *“caring”* of the teachers.

Most of the homes only have the presence of one of the parents; according to the municipal psychologist, the DIDEDUC education authorities, the teachers, and the girls, this results from the disintegration of families or because there are a lot of single mothers. According to the municipal psychologist and one of the teachers, family disintegration makes youngsters susceptible of joining gangs. However, the DIDEDUC education authority mentioned that there have been no children participating in gangs or gangs causing problems in schools, but they feel that *“we are all prone to this”*. According to the principal, there have been clashes in front of the school between former students, some of which have *“been killed”* for participating in gangs.

The municipal psychologist, the DIDEDUC education authority and all the school stakeholders mentioned that this is a very heterogeneous population with respect to economic factors; you have people who do better financially, and also people *“who have nothing”*. There are parents who can send their children to school and others who *“have no money to (send) their children to school”*. Among the parents who can send their children to school, there are some in a better position than others, as mentioned by a teacher: *“a child comes with new shoes and he has at least two more pairs for the physical education day ... but there are children who don’t and come to school with torn shoes”*. A teacher mentioned that *“the despair to try to help their families and not having the necessary money”* drives the youngsters to join a gang. According to a teacher, families with 5 or more children face more economic difficulties and it becomes more complicated when they only have their mother, as can be seen from the following quote:

So I am not going to tell you that I am going to provide a great career for my child ... today two of my children are graduating from sixth grade, the other is in fifth grade, and the other one in third grades ... one more is going to start first grade. So this would mean a lot of expenses ... even if I wanted, I couldn’t help them get to where I’d like.

Mother

Most of the parents of the basic studies institute, according to the municipal psychologist, work on *“a trade ... at the market or on agriculture”*, while the economic activities of the mothers of the students are, according to the teachers: *“making tortillas, washing and ironing clothes”*. A mother mentioned that she *“collects scrap materials, cans, to sell”*. Of the twelve parents who participated in the focus groups, 7 (84%) did not attend school, of which 1 (14%) was male. The five that did go to school were women, of which one went up to 1st grade, one up to 2nd grade of primary school, two up to 6th grade. One said: *“I studied about five years, but I can’t remember a thing”*. Most have in average 3 children (range: 1 to 5) and most have all their children at school, whether at the primary and/or basic secondary level. Parents have a positive image of the teachers because they mentioned *“here there are very good male teachers; the female teachers have been really good; I have no complaints because they are all good”*. The majority of the boys, girls and youngsters work; in general, the boys work out of their homes and the girls are responsible for some house chores. However, although less frequently,

some also work inside and outside of their homes. Those who attend primary school usually work in the mornings and study in the afternoons, while those who study in middle school work during the week and study on the weekends. Sometimes the boys, girls and youngsters who work are the children of *“single mothers...they have several children and since they are the eldest, they need to contribute to the household”*. The usual activities for boys are: selling at the market, working on the fields, helping as masons/mechanics/electricians, shoe shiners, collecting bottles, distributing corn, while the girls work at tortilla shops or wash and iron clothes. Their household responsibilities include taking care of their siblings, preparing the food, washing dishes and clothing, and organizing the room. All the stakeholders of the school, the municipal psychologist and the DEDUC education authority reported these characteristics.

According to the municipal psychologist, at the middle level, the number of pregnancies among teenagers is *“very high”*. These students are between 13 and 14 years old. The principal mentioned that they have had students between 17 and 18 years old at school. A teacher mentioned that these are *“girls who in the end do not have the support of the father of their child and stay alone, so we continue with the same cycle”*. Another teacher mentioned that some youngsters *“don’t even have a job and begin their experience in marriage with nothing to offer to their children”*. The teachers described their students as: creative, *“thirsty of knowledge and wanting to know everything”*, entertaining, with great imagination, caring, participative, fun, dynamic, optimistic, collaborative, and *“each child is different, each child shows his/her love in a different way”*. In addition they mentioned that some students are restless and brusque. They mentioned that in the classroom they have some students who show no interest for their studies, despite having the economic possibilities, and others with a lot of limitations who *“make an effort and are outstanding”*. The following quote shows the opinion of a teacher about one of her students:

... I have a very special case, when we were doing a handicraft for Mother’s Day, a lady came to talk to me because her child was not going to be able to hand in his work ... and she wanted me to tell her what to do so that he could finish it later ... because right now she didn’t have the money to buy him the materials ... I told her there was no problem, that he could turn it in the following week ... and when I went to class and asked for his material, to my surprise he did have it, so I asked the boy, “what happened? Your mother came to ask if you could turn it in later”. And the boy said: “I borrowed the money from my neighbour and I will pay her back later”... so they find the way to do well ... because of his love for his mother, he found the money elsewhere to do the handicraft ... he found the way to stand out despite the adversities.

Teacher

There are students with a very low academic performance, low self esteem, emotional problems and/or who show aggressiveness because of their family problems: separation of their parents, intra-familial violence, alcoholism, migration of their fathers to the U.S.A teacher mentioned that there is a student in her classroom who is very violent and has a drug problem (marihuana, glue) and whenever his mother was summoned, *„it was the grandmother who always came, and she said she was tired of him”*. Family problems also affect students with special education needs with or without disabilities, which show in their hygiene, level of aggressiveness or dependency. With respect to the latter, a teacher mentioned a girl who *„found it hard to leave me”*.

According to the principal of the school, there are students who are „*autistic, deaf, have cerebral palsy, Down Syndrome*“. Children with special education needs with or without disabilities are described as children who need a lot of time, dedication, patience, love and care; some need special care, as taking them to the bathroom, helping them eat and carrying them from one place to the other. A student with a motor disability was described by the principal and the teachers as a child with a great desire for independency, who wanted to do things for himself. They added that they had seen how he had progressed, in the beginning he would be „*tied to his wheel chair*“ and now „*he hardly uses his walker*“. This change is attributed, on the one hand to the fact that he is surrounded by normal children, which has fostered his independency and motivated him to do the same things his classmates do. On the other hand, the support of the mother, whom they describe as admirable, a fighter, who puts into practise the suggestions made to her and is not over-protective.

One of the teachers commented that the group of normal students in her classroom are „*noble and cooperative*“ with children with SEN (Special Education Needs) with or without disabilities. Sometimes, the siblings of children with SEN with or without disabilities are the ones who look after them.

In the classrooms, the principal and the teachers mention that they have students who: a) are repeating, b) are over-aged, and c) are over-aged and repeating. They stressed that the classrooms are heterogeneous with respect to the age of the students. A teacher mentioned that in her classroom there were „*seven children repeating and it was hard to get them to adapt ... because they had very bad habits from the previous year, from before, or from home*“. The girls think that there are over-aged students „*because some don't pay attention and repeat the same grade until they pass it*“.

Girls believe boys have more chances to study. A girl mentioned that „*some think that men deserve more to study than women ... even though both deserve the same things*“. In addition, they have the perception that boys have fewer responsibilities at home since they „*watch TV, play and do their homework*“, only a few help with the cleaning.

5 Inclusion Perspective

One of the questions of this research was how the stakeholders understand or interpret inclusive education. The answer to this question is inferred from the reports made by school stakeholders, stakeholders out of school, and observations made during visits to the establishment. Five perspectives were identified, as follows: a) Education as a right for all, but not equal for all; b) Expectations about education; c) Roles involved in education and its delivery; d) Inclusive Education for those outside the system; and e) The classroom, a place with homogeneous methodology for diverse students. Below is a description of each.

5.1 Education as a right for all, but not equal for all

Stakeholders recognize that education is a right, but believe there are situations that complicate its fulfillment in all the cases in the same way; these are: pregnancies and teenage mothers, special education needs with or without disabilities, over-aged students, being a girl, repeating student, and being a gang member.

The municipal psychologist mentioned that teenage pregnancies are common, in particular at the middle level. She mentioned that *“they are given the chance and it is up to them to take it or not”*, but recognizes that, as the principal of the Inclusive Education school mentioned, *“the majority does not continue studying”*. They both mentioned that young ladies usually stop attending school and they *“work at a distance”*. According to the municipal psychologist this is because, on the one hand, *“family situations ... what will people say”*, and on the other hand, the decision of the principals with respect to *“until when are they going to be allowed”* to go to the establishment. The principal of the Inclusive School mentioned that maternity limits the possibilities to continue studying, as described below:

... after X had her baby, she came back. She got pregnant around mid-year, we gave her the chance to come during her pregnancy, and to take her exams. She had her baby ... and went back to sixth grade afterwards. The problem is that everything is different with a baby. So, some days she would come, and some others she wouldn't ... she studied half the year and then she dropped out. She said it was better to drop out, that she was thankful, but the baby wouldn't let her work. Last year, a similar case dropped out. This year she tried to come back, she came during the first two months and then she stopped ... it is a very difficult responsibility, they have nobody to take care of their baby or if they do, they don't have time in the afternoon to study or work on something ... they are here but they are thinking of what is happening there, so their maternal instinct doesn't allow them to study.

Principal

There also seems to be a taboo about teenage pregnancy, specifically among the parents, but there are also a number of local stakeholders who question the taboo and recognize and join efforts to help these young ladies continue studying; the obstacles stop being social and cultural myths, but the responsibilities linked to maternity.

The principal, the teachers, the girls and the DIDEDUC education authorities mentioned that children with special education needs with or without disabilities –SEN– continue to face challenges to achieve acceptance in regular schools. The principal mentioned that this can happen despite the fact that *“in DIDEDUC meetings they have informed us that we have an obligation and that these children have the right to be included with the rest”*. This situation is not circumscribed to the municipality where this case study was carried out, but seems to be a common practise in other departments of the country. A teacher mentioned that this year he had *“a special child”* who *“because of the discrimination he was subjected to, because he was not accepted in any school (the mother and the child) had to come here to live”*. It seems that allowing a child with SEN study at a regular school, according to the principal and DIDEDUC education authorities, is subject to the decision and calling of the teacher. This is described below:

... at school we have tried or try to make sure that these children are taken care by teachers with a calling, because these children need ... time, dedication, patience, care, love ... thank God there are teachers who do have this calling because others say: “No, give the child to a different teacher ... I'd rather not” ... that interest in a child ... to tell you the truth is fundamental ... because they have a right to an education, just as the others do”.

DIDEDUC education authority

During one of the focus groups, one of the girls mentioned that they might not be accepted because this entails *“a huge responsibility for the teachers ... they need to take care of the child and they can’t take care of their other students”*.

In addition, there seems to be some tension about whether or not these children should be at a regular school, according to reports from the DEDUC education authorities. On the one hand, some think that both students with SEN and regular students benefit from being at the same school, since if a child with SEN *“sees another child who can do it, he is motivated to try to do it ... they go one step at a time but they progress more and more”*, while regular children *“protect him, help him, bring him, take him, take care of him, offer him everything and are always looking after him, so they are solidary”*. On the other hand, it is also advantageous to have them in a resource classroom or a specific place where they can receive *“the attention they truly need”*, *“not all the schools have a ramp to give access to these children, or the necessary conditions to provide the attention they need and deserve”*. The principal also touched on the training that teachers need to have to provide attention to students with SEN with or without disabilities, mentioning that at the school *“they receive the students regardless of their religion, economic status, special needs, physical needs, etc ... they can all come ... and even though we are not trained for this, my colleagues (teachers) do what they can, they achieve marvellous things with them ...”*. Finally, during the observations, it seemed that one of the students with a physical disability seemed to be more integrated than included in the classroom. Only the teacher and one student interacted with him. On the one hand, the interaction between the physically disabled student and the teacher consisted of working with the student individually when the rest were instructed to look some words in the dictionary. The teacher wrote the homework in the student’s notebook. On the other hand, the regular student fed the physically disabled student during recess; that was the interaction between these two students.

This suggests that even though it is true that efforts have been made to raise awareness among the education community on the rights of children with SEN with or without disabilities to be accepted in regular schools, there still is some resistance to this within the education community because of lack of competencies or training to provide the necessary assistance. However, stakeholders agree that both students with SEN with or without disabilities and regular students benefit from being in the same school. The first ones are motivated by regular students, and these in turn acquire values of solidarity.

There are over-aged students in the establishment; however, one of the teachers feels these students would benefit more from academic programs specifically designed for their situation. She mentioned that the students she has in her classroom *“work really well”* but stressed the importance of making them understand *“the respect towards the youngest children”* and *“being careful about what they talk about or who they talk to during recess”*. Below is the quote from the teacher:

Here we have many over-aged children, they are not denied the opportunity. However, some suggest they should be in proper establishments for them, although not every place has a night school ... at least not here ... there is no proper place where these children can continue studying primary school. Here if a child respects certain guidelines and the parent helps with the over-age situation, it is possible to do it ... over-age affects the younger kids because they receive a different kind of guidance from the older kids. But if a child follows the rules, it is possible to

work with them ... although the ideal would be to send them to places that were more appropriate to their age.

Teacher

This suggests that over-aged students are accepted in a regular school under certain conditions but it is felt that they would benefit more from programs specifically designed for them, because they are seen as students that are different from the others because of their interests, stage of development and behaviour.

There are three positions related to the right of girls to study. The first one relates to the traditional belief that girls should not go to school. This was mentioned by a teacher and a girl, who know or have heard of this; the second, a recognition of the fact that girls must study, but studies finish when they complete their primary education. A mother commented that her daughters would study up to 6th grade, while her son would continue with secondary education. The third position is the belief that girls have the same rights boys have with respect to education. This last position was mentioned by two mothers and a girl, although the explanations given by each are different. The mother mentions that just as her son would study the diversified high school, her daughter would do it too, because that is her right; that is, her vision with respect to gender equality. This vision is shared by a girl, who mentioned that *“some people think men deserve more studies than women”*, but that she believes that *“both deserve the same”*. The other mother maintains that it is important for her daughter to study to help her become an independent person that can face life with her own means. This suggests that there are different perceptions about a girl’s right to education. On the one hand, it would seem that girls are still in a position of disadvantage, since some stakeholders mentioned that there are parents who still believe that a girl should stay home, or that 6th grade schooling is enough. On the other hand, there are stakeholders that enforce the right of a girl to receive an education, regardless of whether this relates to reasons of equality or economic independence.

According to a teacher, when students *“fail a year or are doing poorly or have bad grades”*, parents take them out of school and send them to work. So repeating or having academic trouble seems to be enough reason to stop studying.

Finally, the principal mentioned that those who belong to a gang have indicated that they are not accepted in education establishments because of who they are. She added that she would accept them under the condition that they abide by the school regulations and standards, as described below:

Researcher: What do you think you need to do to get respect, to be valued?

Participant: I think they are conscious, because the youngsters tell us “we went to other establishments and they wouldn’t give us a chance, because of who we are; however, you have us here”. So I tell them: “we have the same rights, the same obligations, which you will respect while you are here because this is an education center. From here to there, you are students”. And we try to teach them values, some can be rescued, while others definitely can’t.

Principal

5.2 Expectations about education

Education plays a very important role in improving the quality of life of the persons and the conditions of the municipality and developing basic life competencies. In view of this, there is also certain tension between the academic offer and the work offer.

Municipal authorities and mothers consider that education allows them to improve the quality of life of the people because “education in any area is always a better economic and social opportunity”. Municipal authorities believe that education plays an essential role in the autonomy of women because “... if a girl doesn’t know how to read or write, she will for sure turn into a single mother ... or will have six children, three marriages ... but an educated girl will have two children, and she will learn how to plan ...”. For two mothers, an education that allows her children to get a job, “to become better people” and “help their father with his work”.

For the municipal authorities, the role that education can play with respect to the development of the municipality is very important. This stakeholder mentioned that he tries to promote education among the youth, because he feels this is the only way in which the municipality will be able to achieve a “better level of culture”, because “an educated municipality will have better chances to develop in any area”.

The principal and a mother perceive education as the means to acquire basic life competencies. The principal emphasized the importance of these for children with SEN with or without disabilities, to ensure they are not objects of scams. She believes they need to learn to read and write, “what a quetzal bill looks like, what are 25 cents, what are 50 cents”. According to the principal, this is fundamental to “fend for themselves...to learn, to deter anyone from misleading them ... because there are many people out there looking to take advantage of them”. For the mother, who didn’t go to school, acquiring life competencies will help her children escape shame and mocking. The competencies that are important for her are those that will allow her children to go somewhere else on their own; that is, knowing how the bus system works, being able to find an address. Below is her quote:

... I don’t want them to be like us, who don’t know a thing ... unfortunately we didn’t have the chance to go to school ... they send us to a certain address and we don’t know where to go ... they tell us, “take this bus” and it is as if we couldn’t see, because we don’t know what bus to take ... sometimes there are people who ... when you ask them they tell you “don’t you feel ashamed to be asking for directions?” so I tell my children what has happened to me and that I don’t want the same things to happen to them.

Mother

Finally, there is a certain tension with respect to the academic offer and the labour offer. On the one hand, mothers feel that education is the means towards the labour market. One of the mothers mentioned that the work you find “matches the grade you finished”. On the other hand, two teachers mentioned that education doesn’t always lead to finding a job. One of them believes that several parents feel that education doesn’t necessarily lead to finding a job, either because they already have a job without having education or because “there are more jobs available in the skills market than the professional market ... because why become a lawyer or engineer if you can’t find a job anyway, so it is better to work anywhere else ...”. This was confirmed by a teacher who mentioned that her partner

hasn't found a job, concluding *"you end up working on things for which you didn't need to study"*. Below is a quote that illustrates the experience of this teacher:

They want youngsters to have five years of experience ... my boyfriend is almost graduating as a graphic designer ... he goes somewhere and they tell him "we don't want someone with university education, we want a high school student", "Well, give me the job with that salary", "No, you are over-qualified", "It doesn't matter, we need to have five years of experience, how am I going to get it if I can't find a job now?" The end up working on other things that they learn and then, "why did I study so much?"

Teacher

In summary, it seems that the expectations that stakeholders have with respect to education is that it is the means to improve, both with respect to their own living conditions, and the conditions of those around them. However, two stakeholders disagree with this. One of them feels this is not the case for all the parents, who have been able to progress without an education. The other stakeholder feels this because in the experience of her partner, having studied does not guarantee an employment. So there seems to be a rupture between the academic offer and the labour market.

5.3 Roles involved in education and its delivery

According to the municipal authorities, *"education is linked to infrastructure"* and therefore the work of the municipality relates to *"construction"*. For this stakeholder, the quality of education is dependent not only on a *"conscientious teacher"*, but also an *"Education Ministry ... that is conscious of the needs of the teachers"*. It feels that the municipality could support the Education Ministry to become a *"complement"*, but stresses that *"the budget of our neighbours is not for education; it is for infrastructure and services"*. This suggests that each stakeholder needs to comply with his/her role and provide the corresponding support, without assuming the responsibilities or support that should be provided by others.

5.4 Inclusive Education for those outside the system

The main challenge for the municipal authority is to achieve a municipality with a 100% literacy rate. In addition, the municipality has signed an agreement with the Education Ministry for the Human Training and Education Municipal Centers –CEMUFAC– where they teach courses (like) *"baking, desserts, cooking, and jewellery making ... embossing, painting on fabric, glass and metal..."*. The majority of the participants in these courses are women, who are *"housewives"* or *"peasants"*. The municipal authority sees these courses as a *"base to perform in the social medium"* because for adults, *"education is not only to have an economic income, but to make a livelihood"*.

5.5 The classroom, a place with homogeneous methodology for diverse students

This perspective encompasses the challenges teachers find because of the diversity of the students in their classroom. Basically these challenges relate, on the one hand, to providing attention to students with multiple disabilities and over-aged students and, on the other hand, the issue of a diagnosis.

A teacher mentioned that it was hard for her to have in her class a student with multiple disabilities because she needed to work *"right next to him"* and *"he needed a lot of attention"* because he *"got distracted easily"*. In addition, since he was a 22-year old student, *"he liked the ladies"* and *"you needed*

to monitor him constantly ... because he would stare at the girls". Another teacher mentioned that there are two over-aged repeating students in her class who *"are in love"* so she thinks her challenge is to *"convince them that it is better to study first"* because *"they have their hormones raging against them ... they are not thinking as a six-year old second grader"*. The education authorities of DEDUC mentioned that it is essential to provide training to the teachers to get them to *"be more motivated"* to develop inclusive schools; he also thinks it is important for schools to have *"access ramps for children with difficulties"*.

Finally, a diagnosis seems to be important for the education community; however, there seems to be a trend to making these diagnoses empirically. This can be inferred from the report of a teacher who feels that one of her students presents a *"certain degree of autism"* because *"they just touch him and he is ready to hit ... I understand that children like this react violently when they are given love"*. In addition she mentioned that the student has a neurological problem, *"he falls and sometimes he is running and he falls to one side ... and he is a bit aggressive"*. During one of the visits, one of the stakeholders showed us the diagnosis made by the doctor who had sent a student to the establishment. The student had been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders, as written in the prescription.

In summary, stakeholders agree that training is important to provide attention to students with special education needs with or without disabilities. One of the stakeholders feels that in order to have an inclusive school, it is necessary to have ramps. Finally, a proper diagnosis is important for the teachers; however, there are doubts about how beneficial this is if the diagnosis is made empirically and the problem is also addressed empirically.

6 Access Dimension

The word access is defined as the *"action to get there or approach; entry or passage; reaching a deal or communicating with someone; possibility to achieve something or reach someone"* (RAE, 2011). To this definition it is necessary to add three times when, according to the stakeholders, there is a possibility to access the Education System. These are: entry, permanence and transition. Based on this, the factors that constitute barriers and opportunities to access the Education System were identified.

There are external and internal factors at school that constitute barriers and/or opportunities. Below are the reports of the stakeholders with respect to barriers and opportunities.

6.1 External barriers to school access

The barriers identified by the stakeholders can relate to context, culture and individual and/or family characteristics. Below is a description of these.

Context barriers are five: a) pedestrian infrastructure, b) size of the land, c) distance between the home and the school, d) insecurity, and d) disengagement between the academic offer and the labour market.

According to the boys and girls, the absence of infrastructure or inadequate infrastructure is a barrier that prevents their access to school, because they are at risk of getting hit by a car or it limits their

ability to move. This seems to have more impact in the case of students with a physical disability, as mentioned below:

Researcher: Do you know of anyone who is not at school, who is not attending school?

Participant: Just one, he got a disease of the bones and now he can't walk, so he can't come to study and since he lives down there, it is really hard to climb ... he can't come to school because it was too hard for him.

Focus Group-Girls

The municipal education authority mentioned that the size of the plot of land limits the possibilities to construct ramps; this could turn into a barrier that would limit the access of students with physical disabilities.

The distance between the house and the school is a barrier that impacts the permanence of the students in school. This was identified by the girls and the DIDEDUC education authority, who mention this is common in the rural area because they *"need to walk a lot, there is no transportation to go to the establishments"*. He mentioned that he knew a family with six children, of which *"none had gone to school ... because of the distance"*. One of the girls, who has a brother with a physical disability, mentioned that even though their mother pays bus services for both of them, it *"is hard for her"* because she lives far away from school.

The boys and girls mentioned that the surroundings and/or the way to school are unsafe. On the one hand, girls mention that there are *"men with earrings who smoke"*, and a girl said *"I run with my little brother"*. Both mentioned that they have heard of boys and girls being stolen; a girl commented that her *"mother was going to be picked up by a car, they were going to steal her"*. However, when the researcher asked in one of the focus groups of girls if they knew about or had heard of a case, a girl answered that *"on TV, yes ... on the news ..."*.

Finally, the disconnection between the academic offer and the labour market becomes a barrier that prevents transition to the middle or superior level. This was reported by two teachers and basically relates to questioning the usefulness of continuing education at these levels since there is no guarantee of finding a job. A teacher mentioned that some parents, who have found jobs without finishing their studies, feel these are not necessary to find a job, or believe it is more feasible to find a job *"in the skills and trades market than in the professional market"*. The other teacher mentioned that her partner, who is about to graduate from university, hasn't found a job because he is *"over-qualified"* for the positions vacant, which means that they *"end up working on other trades they learn along the way, so why study so much"*.

With respect to cultural barriers, these relate to beliefs of the fathers and mothers, or the communities (for example, neighbours, relatives) about gender, special education needs with or without disabilities or pre-school. As mentioned in the section of perspectives, beliefs related to gender and special education needs with or without disabilities turn into barriers when they thwart access to education by these segments of the population. With respect to pre-school, two teachers at this level commented that there is still certain resistance from the parents because they feel that *"all they do is play"* or *"are fearful to send them because this might bring additional costs"*.

Most of the barriers identified by the stakeholders related to individual and/or family characteristics. These are eight and consist of: a) pregnancy and maternity, b) over-age, c) repeating and/or learning difficulties, d) child work, e) lack of interest, f) migration, g) economic factors and absence of one of the parents, and h) large families in which the eldest need to look after the youngest. According to stakeholder reports, the majority of these barriers have an impact on the permanence of the students in the education system. The exception is the case of a large family, which according to the teachers has an impact on the entry into the education system. However, when you belong to a large family and you need to look after your siblings, it also affects your possibilities to remain in school. The following chart describes these barriers and the stakeholder or stakeholders who mentioned them, with a quote.

Table 1. Individual and/or family characteristics that constitute barriers to accessing the school system

Individual and/or family characteristics	Stakeholder	Quote
Pregnancy and maternity (both at the level of primary school and middle school)	Teachers; Municipal Psychologist; Principal	<i>Another problem is early pregnancies. We had a case here, three years ago, a girl who was in fifth grade (primary school), I believe she couldn't continue with her studies because of this. She has her baby and she couldn't continue studying because she now needs to look after him, she doesn't have a husband, so she needs to work.</i> Teacher
Over-age	Teachers; education authority of DEDUC	<i>... sometimes the children already start too old ... very old ... they don't want to go to school. They feel ashamed ... and well there is a night school, but they don't all go ... the parents pull them out because of this ... and they send them to work.</i> DEDUC education authority
Repeating and/or learning difficulties	Teachers	<i>... sometimes, for example, they fail the year, or they are doing poorly, they get bad grades and the parents (tell them): "You are not going to study ... look for a job".</i> Teacher
Child work	Teachers; Municipal Psychologist; DEDUC education authority; Girls	<i>... a boy is not studying any more, he shines shoes (works as a shoe shiner) over there by the market and his sister works at a tortilla shop.</i> Focus Group-Girls
Lack of Interest	Teachers	<i>I have a boy here ... I have told him that he really the chance he is being given to study is a good one, that he needs to take advantage of it, but he says, "I don't feel like it, that's why I don't come" ... He isn't really motivated to come ... he</i>

Individual and/or family characteristics	Stakeholder	Quote
		<p><i>says: "I don't want to, really I don't like it, that's why I don't come".</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Teacher</p>
Migration (external and internal within the municipality)	Teachers; DIEDUC education authority	<p><i>Last year I had the case of two students who enrolled; they were here until March ... and in September they appeared again, one appeared and the other one didn't. The same thing happened this year ... so I imagine people migrate to find a job.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Teacher</p>
		<p><i>... in the rural area ... they come from other places to work, to pick coffee ... so they are there are just for a little while and then go elsewhere. Those who live in the area, sometimes have absences for a similar reason, because they will work with parents.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">DIEDUC education authority</p>
Economic factors and absence of one of the parents	Municipal Psychologist	<p><i>... I think economic reasons ... if one of the parents is missing, maybe the children need to work, help their mother or grandmother, whoever takes care of them. That might also be the reason why they leave school ...</i></p>
Large Families	Teachers	<p><i>Researcher: Who never shows up, is not at school? Teacher: Those with large families.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Focus Group-Teachers</p>
Large Families + Looking after siblings		<p><i>Last year ... one of the girls disappeared suddenly. I tried to find out and the lady told me, "I had to leave her at home looking after the girls, the younger ones, because I was finishing work too late". So they need to look after their siblings so they are left home.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Teacher</p>

In summary, the external barriers mentioned by stakeholders can relate to context, cultural aspects and individual and/or family characteristics. It is interesting to observe that most of the barriers identified pertain to the last group. Furthermore, stakeholders closer to the school population seem to be more aware of the challenges these students need to overcome to attend school.

6.2 External opportunities for school access

The external opportunities identified are institutional and individual and/or family characteristics.

The institutional opportunities are: a) investment on education by the municipality, b) investment in infrastructure by the Development Council, c) inter-institutional coordination in favor of extra-school education programs for adults, d) education alternatives to diversified high school, e) offer of academic programs, and f) support programs. The majority of opportunities, except for the support programs, were identified by the municipal authority, and as can be expected, relate to the role played by the Municipality in access to school and/or education. Below is a description of each opportunity.

Investment on education by the municipality relates to the hiring of teachers, infrastructure, and transportation. The municipal authority mentioned that they hire teachers at the middle level of specific areas and pre-school. This as a result of an agreement with the Education Ministry to hire primary school teachers. They mentioned that before the agreement, they had hired 85 primary school teachers. With respect to infrastructure, they mentioned that in addition to *“construction work”*, they also *“repair the schools, paint them and give maintenance”*. In addition, when they organize activities they provide support by renting *“sound ... sending chairs and hiring a tent”*. Finally, the municipality provides *“free transportation in the morning ... at noon and in the afternoons (for) children in the afternoon shift”*, for specific areas of the municipality, located far away from school. He mentioned that this measure was taken *“by the municipality to overcome the barrier of distance ...”*.

Investments on infrastructure by the Development Council are mainly related to infrastructure. It was mentioned that the plans include the construction of a pre-school building.

There is inter-institutional coordination in favour of extra-school education programs for adults focussed on entrepreneurship. The municipality has signed an agreement with the Education Ministry for the CEMUCAF courses. The authorities mentioned that on the first year *“a total of 400 people graduated, last year 35 and this year 227”*. The majority of persons attending these courses are *“housewives”* or *“peasants”*. He mentioned that they also have a program with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food –MAGA– which provides courses like *“sewing, jewellery making, production of shampoo, disinfectant, soap, and candles”*. This program is also given *“in the smaller villages”* and *“the majority are women”*. The education authority added that the municipality provides support to the facilitator of these courses, including gas, an office, areas to teach the courses and the organization *“to help them summon the people”*. He mentioned that apparently there is a group of persons who took the course who are forming a cooperative and are *“already making money with this”*.

In addition, the municipality supports the universities, both public and private, with the use of facilities for their university campuses. According to the municipal authority, the schools are used as university campuses.

The education authority considers it important to provide *“an introduction for the students to learn about the different carriers and possibilities offered at the municipality”* and that technical carriers are an alternative to *“high school, accountant or secretarial studies”*. As a result, this opportunity was called vision with academic alternatives to diversified studies.

Reports indicate that the offer of academic programs at the level of pre-school and primary school is almost complete in this municipality, so the priority is to expand the coverage of the basic secondary studies cycle. The authority mentioned that currently in those villages that *“don’t have an institute, there is the possibility to study through tele-secondary”*. Tele-secondary is a pedagogical model to

provide secondary education to youngsters who live in communities where there is no or there is insufficient academic coverage. One single teacher is responsible for all the subjects for a specific grade and the material is audio-visual or printed.

Taken from:

http://www.mineduc.gob.gt/portal/contenido/menu_lateral/programas/Telesecundaria/.

With respect to the support programs, a teacher and the DIEDUC education authority mentioned that the gratuity program (materials, meals and no enrolment fee) has contributed to the permanence of students in school. The teacher mentioned that the school supplies and the school meal *“is sometimes late but eventually arrives”*. The mother of a physically disabled student mentioned that her son was benefiting from a *“scholarship”* and that this had allowed him to continue studying.

Finally, a favourable attitude towards education turns into an opportunity in the individual and/or family characteristics category. Such an attitude was shown by the mothers and the girls. As mentioned by the stakeholders, they know youngsters or have siblings for whom studying is important and therefore they combine studies with work. In general, they study on the weekends. In addition, parents make an effort to ensure that their children have access to education. A girl mentioned that a boy had *“a disease of the bones ... he can't walk ...”* which makes it impossible for him to attend school. However, his father *“pays a teacher to teach him at home”*. A mother mentioned that she is advocating for the right to an education for her daughter and she keeps telling her husband that if their son will be given the chance to continue in the diversified high school cycle, their daughter should have the same opportunity.

In summary, the external opportunities for school access are mostly institutional. These were only mentioned by the municipal authority and related to the actions undertaken by the municipality in favour of the inhabitants of the municipality, to provide access to school and/or education for them. Only one individual/family characteristics opportunity was identified, which relates to a favourable attitude towards education. This was mentioned by the girls and the mothers and relates to the efforts people make to remain or continue with their studies.

6.3 Internal barriers to access school

Internal barriers at school can be institutional or social. Below is a description of these.

Institutional barriers relate to the infrastructure of the classrooms and institutional measures. A pre-school teacher mentioned that the infrastructure near the classroom has an impact on the permanence of her students because during the rainy season the children need to jump a water pot hole and they usually get wet. She mentioned that the above combined with the fact that pre-school has an afternoon shift, makes the parents refrain from sending them to prevent illnesses.

Institutional measures become barriers when, on the one hand, relate to the documents requested by the school to the parents for the enrolment of the students and, on the other hand, when they are ad hoc. According to the DIEDUC education authority, the requirements to enrol a child in school include: *“birth certificate, copy of the identity card (DPI) of both parents, if the parents work, copy of the identity card (DPI) of the person in charge ...”*. This stakeholder believes that the parents can cover these expenses *“because it is not much what they need to spend”*. However, a teacher feels that the documents requested are a barrier that prevents entry to the school, because *“some haven't even*

been registered before the Registry of Persons and they don't have the paperwork to come. There are parents that have no identity card (DPI) or identification, because they don't have a birth certificate or anything".

An institutional ad hoc measure is one taken at school to address specific situations, regardless of the legal framework, regulations or guidelines established at the macro level. According to the statements of a mother, a girl and a boy, there seem to be ad hoc measures related to the school uniform. A mother mentioned *"they can't come in if they don't bring their uniform"* and if the parents can't find the economic resources to buy the uniform, they withdraw their children from school. A girl confirmed this because she mentioned that school authorities *"are at the door checking that the students bring their uniforms; if they don't, they are sent back home"*. However, in the same Focus Group, another girl mentioned that she has arrived at school with no uniform but she hasn't been sent home. During the Focus Group with the boys, one of them mentioned that before the uniform became mandatory at school, there were girls who brought their Mayan costumes. This is an ad hoc measure since according to *"Government Decree No. 226-2008 of Gratuity, the use of the school uniform is voluntary in public establishments"* (<https://www.mineduc.gob.gt/GRATUIDAD/>).

The other ad hoc measure relates to what a teacher and a girl commented about the fact that some regular schools in the municipality or the country refuse access to education to children with special education needs with or without disabilities. Below is what the principal said:

... they all have the same rights, regardless of any physical, socio-economic, impediment, but we don't all follow this rule ... in the municipality ... we are four urban schools ... and we have an obligation, children (with SEN) have a right to be included with the other children, but the truth is they don't ... at my school we have too many children (with SEN) ... because they haven't been accepted in other establishments ... why do these children have to come all the way here? Why does the lady have to make such an effort to come here? We have six children from our same quarter and the other 10 come from other places. So we understand that they did not want to accept them. We assume it is written but not enforced ...

Principal

One of the education authorities of DEDUC seems to have two opposing opinions about this. On the one hand, he seems to support what the principal and the teacher said about the fact that entrance to a regular school by a child with SEN depends on the decision and calling of the teacher, but on the other hand he mentions that access to school by these children doesn't seem to be a problem in the municipality, as mentioned below:

Well generally at (the municipality) ... there is no discrimination, not accepting children ... even in a number of school there are children with special education needs, so this is not a limitation ... we have the support of the teachers, their willingness to support these children, because it requires patience, time ... a calling, but in general there are no obstacles to the acceptance of these children.

DIDEDUC education authority

Finally, social barriers include harassment at school and acceptance of students with special education needs with or without disabilities by the teachers and their classmates. One girl, who said that there

are children who stop coming to school because “*children pick on them*”, mentioned harassment at school. According to one mother and one teacher, acceptance plays a key role in the permanence of children with SEN at school. Below are both quotes:

... the teacher would say “if you don’t listen, sit over there” ... so they would pay no attention to him and he was said, he did not want to study.

Mother

... I have had the chance of having special children (in my classroom), but the problem is they are adapting and you don’t know if the parents will keep sending them to school because it depends a lot on the acceptance they receive from the group.

Teacher

In summary, internal barriers at school may be institutional or social. Institutional barriers relate to the infrastructure of the classroom and institutional measures. The latter relate to the documents requested to enrol the students according to one teacher, or the ad hoc decisions taken, as reported by a mother, girls and boys. Social barriers related to harassment at school and acceptance of children with SEN by the teachers or their classmates. One girl mentioned harassment at school, while a mother and a teacher talked about acceptance. Both institutional and social barriers have more importance in whether a student will remain in school. The two exceptions are institutional barriers, which related to the documents needed for enrolment and being a child with SEN. Both affect entry.

6.4 Internal opportunities for school access

The internal opportunities for school access are institutional and consist of an ample perspective of inclusive education and teachers as institutional agents. Below is a description of each. According to the principal, all the children have a right to an education regardless of socio-economic, physical, religious, cultural, and other factors. Therefore, the establishment under her direction is considered inclusive from an ample perspective of the concept. In general, when talking about inclusion, stakeholders think of children with special education needs with or without disabilities attending regular schools. Below is a quote from a teacher talking about the school in this case study:

... I feel the school has the quality of being a great contribution to the community because it does not deny the children an opportunity to study.

Teacher

Finally, teacher reports seem to indicate that they are becoming agents of change. This concept relates to “*people who through their attitudes and actions have the power of generating change. The combination of the will to act and knowing how to act effectively makes these people institutional agents*” (Staton-Salazar, 2010). The teachers mentioned that when some students, both regular students and children with SEN, have stopped attending school, they have gone looking for them to their houses and they have spoken to their parents or the persons in charge of them to find out why they have been absent, stressing the importance of ensuring that the children attend and remain in school. Below is a quote given by a teacher about this:

... with this boy we started on the right foot, he was happy ... a time came when he stopped coming, he didn’t show up for about 15 days, the lady would come and say “he is sick”, but I

would see him out on the street, so I would tell (the lade) “Look, what is happening to X? Really, bring me a medical certificate because it has been too long”, “Oh, I am going to tell you the truth ... his mother was supposed to come around this time and her permission got cancelled, so he does not want to study and now ... he is going out with some youngsters ... who take drugs ... if you want, I can take him out of school”, “No” I said “That is not the solution”. (The boy) is very smart and one day we began talking ... and he made a commitment to come to the school, I hope he keeps doing it ... as teachers we need to walk the extra mile to retain these children and help them finish. We might succeed, but it might happen that they drop out in the end, but the thing is to try and try to get them to commit, to motivate them ... I am working (with him) on the affective part, because he is obviously depressed about his mom ... if he doesn’t come one day I try to find him and I go there and he is there “no, I’ll send him right now”... even if it is the middle of the afternoon, I go.

Teacher

In summary, internal opportunities for school access are institutional. One relates to the ample perspective of inclusion at school and the other one relates to teachers acting as institutional agents.

7 Acceptance Dimension

The construction and understanding of this dimension was based on the information provided by the stakeholders interviewed. Said information makes it possible to understand how this dimension is formed, as well as the barriers and opportunities that how with it.

Acceptance is understood as “*action and effect of accepting*”, which is defined as “*approving, accepting something*”. In the context of inter-personal relations, acceptance can be understood as the opposite of rejecting, understood as “*showing opposition or despising a person, group or community*” (RAE, 2011).

Internal stakeholders identify the classroom and the school as the spaces where acceptance happens, with the classroom as the space reported by most stakeholders. Following are reports by stakeholders about barriers and opportunities.

7.1 Acceptance barriers in the classroom

Acceptance in the classroom relates to classmates in the same room. According to teacher and student reports, individual characteristics are interpreted as barriers to acceptance between classmates. Both the teachers and the boys and girls identified aggressiveness as an individual characteristic that stands on the way of acceptance in the classroom by classmates. Children mentioned that there is a boy who is not accepted because he never follows the rules, he answers back (contradicts, raises his voice) or he disobeys the teacher, he brings marijuana to school and smokes “*behind the bathrooms*”. Finally, over-age and not bringing the uniform are individual characteristics that are causes for not accepting someone. Both characteristics were reported by girls who are victims of mobbing by their classmates. Below does an over-aged student share an experience:

... me ... my classmates say I am too old to be on third grade. That I should be in third grade of the basic secondary cycle, or at least on first grade of the basic secondary cycle because I am too old for the third grade ... I failed first grade twice ...

Focus Group-Girls

A teacher mentioned that a student lies as a strategy to get accepted by the classmates. According to the teacher *“there are some students that can buy some things”*, so by lying *“he gets on the good side of the rest”*. Therefore, it could be assumed that belonging to a different socio-economic status is a barrier to be accepted.

7.2 Acceptance opportunities in the classroom

Acceptance opportunities in the classroom correspond on the one hand to support between classmates, strategies to promote acceptance and turning into an institutional agent.

Support between classmates, as identified by the stakeholders, can be of two kinds. The first kind, according to a teacher, consists of the support given by classmates to a friend with a physical disability to bring him his food during recess or feeding him; this was confirmed during the classroom observations carried out, when a student stayed in the classroom during recess taking care of her classmate with a physical disability and fed him. The second relates to a more instrumental kind of support, provided by students who are repeating to their classmates; one of the girls mentioned that she got along with the students who are repeating *“because they have already learned the same things the previous year and if you don’t understand, they can explain them to you”*.

The strategies to address acceptance in the classroom relates to what the teacher does to manage any situation that might arise, which contributes to fostering acceptance among the students in the classroom. A teacher mentioned that she has a boy in her classroom who has not been accepted by his classmates *“because he grabs stuff ... pinches ... hits”*, so she sat him next to her to manage this type of behaviour and she taught him to ask for things instead of just grabbing them; the boy now ways *“can I have”* instead of grabbing the things. Another teacher mentioned that she teaches the students to *“laugh of themselves”* to *“be prepared”* and *“have that defense mechanism”* ready for when *“the others make fun of you ... you simply say, I think the same thing, that is the way things are”*.

Finally, being an institutional agent is the most important opportunity in the case of the Inclusive School to achieve acceptance in the classroom. What the municipal psychologist and teachers said makes them institutional agents. The Municipal Psychologist mentioned, *“there are only a few cases that cannot adapt to the system”* but she thinks, *“this relates more to the work of the teacher ... motivating and encouraging her students, because in the end that’s our job”*. One of the teachers talked about her experience teaching a child with a physical disability four years ago. Her story provides a picture of an institutional agent because she sees the child as someone who has the ability to learn, be independent and teaches the other students that he is equal to them, to perceive diversity as an opportunity not an obstacle, to support him and above all, relate to him. Below is the quote:

... not demanding as much from him as from the rest, but treating him the same way. Not treating him as a different person who can’t do anything ... he would say “I can’t”, (and I would answer) “that word doesn’t exist, you can, you try” ... sometimes he was in his wheelchair ... I would untie him, “X, get down and play with the others, but you have to get off your chair”, so

he would get off the best he could ... they would look at him and ask “what do you mean he can’t talk?” so I would tell them “look he is just like you in many senses, but unfortunately he can’t talk and move like you do, but he is just like you”, so what you need to do is help him”... they would look at me take him by the hand and they would say “can I take him by the hand now”. And he had many friends while they were playing with him, taking care of him, they helped me look after him.

Teacher

In summary, acceptance opportunities in the classroom have to do with the actions taken by the teachers or among students. Nevertheless, becoming an institutional agent is definitely the most important role as it can generate changes that will bring inclusion.

7.3 Acceptance barriers in the school

The only barrier identified for acceptance at school has to do with expressions of discrimination towards Mayan girls by the boys. This was inferred from what children reported during the Focus Group when the researchers showed them a picture of a group of students in a group activity; two of them are Mayan girls. Below is the quote:

Researcher: Look at this image ...

Participant: Those are little indians studying ...

Participant 2: they are “shumitas” (derogatory remark; a person with bad taste, lowly, uneducated, <http://www.tubabel.com/definicion/34062-shumo>) studying.

Researcher: Why do you think they are “shumitas”? Tell me.

Participant 2: Because they are wearing a Mayan costume and they speak in tongue.

Participant 3: Yes, in q'eqchi'.

Researcher: And do you know girls like that at school?

Participant 4: Yes, there are many here, like five ...

Focus Group-Boys

7.4 Acceptance opportunities in the school

The recognition of the right to an education of people with special education needs with or without disabilities by one of the girls constitutes an opportunity to get accepted in school, as described below:

Researcher: How do you feel about the fact that boys and girls who face different challenges or have different physical needs can come to this school?

Participant: they deserve the opportunity to study, just as we do, who deserve the attention ... we all have the same rights and I believe we should support them and accept them.

Focus Group-Girls

8 Participation Dimension

To participate is to be part of something (RAE, 2001) and “implies an active participation of what is being taught or learned” (Booth, 2002, p. 2). Stakeholders make a distinction between two types of participation: one in the classroom and the other one at school. In addition, stakeholders mention that

there are external and/or internal conditions at the classroom or the school that can become barriers and/or opportunities for participation in any of the two spaces. Below is a summary of what stakeholders reported.

8.1 Barriers to participation in the classroom

Participation in the classroom is understood as participating in the learning process, and as indicated by the name, in the classroom. According to all the stakeholders, there are external or internal conditions that hinder or limit the participation of the students in the classroom, which turn into barriers. The external conditions identified by the stakeholders as barriers to participation by the students in the classroom were grouped in two categories: individual and/or family characteristics and institutional measures. The following chart describes these barriers, mentioning the stakeholder or stakeholders that mentioned them and a quote in cases when more clarity is necessary.

Table 2. Barriers to participation in the classroom

Barrier	Stakeholder	Quote
1. Individual and/or family characteristics		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working 	Teachers, children	<i>A child who is 14 (years old) but is going to turn 15 is in sixth grade ... so he doesn't have the required age to be in sixth grade, to be in primary school, but he is still in that grade because he hasn't been able to advance because he needs to work.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over age 	Teachers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic factor 	Teachers	<i>... the economic factor is really important; for example, sometimes when you ask for materials, there are children who don't come and it is because they are ashamed because they can't bring their material. The following day (they say): "I was really sick or I had to work".</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical abuse 	Teachers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual abuse 	Teachers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsibilities at home 	Teachers	<i>... sometimes there are children who don't do their homework because they have chores at home ... they clean their rooms. Sometimes their mother doesn't have time to wash their clothes ... there are mothers who leave their children by themselves and go to work, and the child needs to clean the house.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family disintegration 	DIDEDUC education	

Barrier	Stakeholder	Quote
	authority, Teachers	
• Intra-familiar violence	Municipal Psychologist	
• Alcoholism	Municipal Psychologist	
• Single mothers	Teachers	
• Absence of both parents because of work reasons	Teachers	
• Over protecting children with special education needs with or without disabilities	Teachers	<i>Just as the girl who can't speak, the lady turns furious (mad) because sometimes the girl tells her they pick on her. One day her mother came shouting: "Look, they took her pencil case and because she can't speak they do with her whatever they want", "No, madam, they didn't take it from her, she forgot it and I have it", "Sorry", she said. Sometimes I think that she knows that her mother pays a lot of attention to her, she protects her too much, so she makes up these situations. So it has been a bit hard with her ...</i> Teacher
2. Institutional measures: gratuity	Municipal Psychologist and Teachers	<i>Gratuity ... doesn't allow us to have the necessary resources to work with the students. They say: "You can't ask for money for photocopies or books", then, how can we work?</i> Municipal Psychologist

On the other hand, the internal conditions of the classroom that have been identified as barriers are: a) scarce or inexistent textbooks and didactic materials, b) overcrowded classrooms; c) infrastructure, and d) strategies to address participation in the classroom. The latter relates to actions undertaken by the teacher to manage the situation in the classroom, which are unfavourable or could affect the participation of the students in the classroom.

During the focus groups with teachers and students, the absence of textbooks and didactic materials in the classroom was mentioned. This was confirmed during one of the classroom observations. One of the students mentioned that the teacher was asking them to "work in groups because not all of them had taken or had the books".

The principal mentioned that the overcrowded classrooms (around 40 students) is a barrier because it limits the time and the attention that the teacher can provide to the students with special education needs with or without disabilities.

With respect to infrastructure, a teacher mentioned that her classroom has no lighting, "during the rainy season there is a huge pot hole" (water that accumulates in a hole on the ground) and her five

year old students needed to jump when leaving the classroom, which is “really hot” because if she opens the door, “there is too much dust” and “their eyes hurt”. Finally, according to reports by girls and teachers, the lack of strategies to address participation makes it difficult to achieve the participation of the students in the classroom. Girls mention that some students don’t pay attention, “they just talk” and when the teacher asks them “they don’t know what to respond”. The students “that misbehave the most are the boys” and “most of the time they sit on the back ... maybe because they are bigger”. A girl mentioned that the teacher did not like to let them work in groups because there are students who make a nuisance of themselves. The teachers mentioned that it is hard for them to provide differentiated attention when there is more than one student with special education needs with or without disabilities and “restless” students or when there is a student with multiple disabilities or an over-aged student. Below is a quote to back this:

... I have four special (kids) in my class, so you need to have, it is not that this is a load, but you need to pay special attention to these kids ... so in this situation, class gets complicated and there are restless children who need to be kept busy at all times.

Teacher

Barriers to participation in the classroom may be external or internal. External barriers relate to individual characteristics, aspects linked to the students’ homes and parents, and institutional measures, in particular the specific issue of gratuity. Internal barriers relate to textbooks and materials, absent or insufficient books, overcrowded classrooms, class infrastructure and strategies to address participation in the classroom. The latter relate to siting restless children on the back of the class and the difficulties related to providing a differentiated attention to students with special education needs with or without disabilities when there is more than one child in the classroom and there are restless students, or when a student presents multiple disabilities and is over-aged.

8.2 Opportunities to participation in the classroom

As mentioned before, participation in the classroom refers to taking part of the learning process in the classroom. As mentioned by the stakeholders, there are external and/or internal conditions that promote and/or favour participation by the students, which turn into opportunities.

The external conditions identified as opportunities are institutional measures (support programs) and inter-institutional support. With respect to institutional measures, the education authority mentioned the gratuity program, which includes a school meal and the delivery of school materials, “which has contributed greatly to the studies of people with scarce resources”. Inter-institutional support relates to the provision of materials, technical assistance and didactic materials by institutions for the students, in particular students with some special education need with or without disabilities. Two teachers mentioned this type of support; one of the teachers mentioned that the Departmental Education Direction provided a walker to a student with a physical disability. Below is a description of the experience of the other teacher with respect to this kind of support:

I have a child suffering from Down Syndrome, he’s been in my class since last year ... and I have been able to progress a bit with him, with the help of a lady who has a degree in psychology, so his behaviour has changed a lot, when he came he was aggressive ... his level of aggressiveness has dropped dramatically ... in the beginning he was very dependent. He

wanted you to do everything for him, he wanted me to throw his trash and with the support of the books provided by the Education Ministry, I have been working with him. Now he works independently, he does his own things. I have taught him to put his own belt; he can't tie his shoes yet, but these are things he couldn't do before, I am hopeful that he will continue to advance.

Teacher

The support provided by classmates, the availability of textbooks and teachers working as institutional agents, are all internal conditions to the classroom that constitute opportunities for the participation of students. The support provided by classmates relates, according to two teachers, to the support they receive from students with special education needs with or without disabilities, by their regular classmates. One of the teachers mentioned *"the children who finish first are the ones who help"*. The other teacher mentioned that *"those who have learned to help ... don't look at them as if they were different, but respect them, love them and take good care of them"* and feel like sometimes *"they go beyond because they say, look, that is not the way you do it, I'll do it for you"*, when the idea is only to guide them and provide accompaniment.

With respect to textbooks, one of the observations made in one of the first grades, showed that all the students had Communications and Language books.

Finally, teachers acting as institutional agents impact on the participation of the students, both regular students and those with special education needs with or without disabilities. Just as in the case of the previous sections that relate to access and acceptance, this characteristic was inferred from the comments made by the teachers and the mother of a student with hearing impairment. Below is the quote of one of the teachers:

Well I believe that the greatest challenges lie in ourselves. As teachers, we need to maintain a good environment, because during class we maintain a positive environment, because of you allow to have a negative environment, everybody becomes negative. So it all depends in the environment we create, right, a positive one that encourages them to think. If they are negative, we need to remain positive to help them leave the room with a positive attitude. To motivate them each day or make them want to return to the classroom and be with us.

Teacher

In summary, the opportunities for participate in the classroom identified by the stakeholders are: institutional measures (support programs), inter-institutional support to specific students with special education needs with or without disabilities, support between classmates, text books, and teachers who act as institutional agents.

8.3 Barriers to participation in the school

The participation of students at school could be affected by external and/or internal conditions. Below is a description of the external conditions, followed by the internal conditions.

The external conditions at school, identified as barriers, related to individual and/or family characteristics. In relation to individual characteristics, the girls mentioned that one of the students with a physical disability is not included by a regular student in games of *"catch ... because he can't*

walk". They also mentioned that regular students don't play with students who "can't walk or don't know how to reach", or "a girl who hurt her leg and cuts her hair like the "Guereja" (comic character in a Mexican television show) (and who) is called by that name". According to some children, they don't all participate in school activities, because even if they want to, "they don't have the money to buy the uniform".

Over-protective attitudes by the parents towards their children with special education needs with or without disabilities are not favourable or limit their participation in school activities, as mentioned by the mother of a physically challenged child:

... and she likes to dance ... but she can't do that, so I tell her "you really can't do that". But there are other activities that she can do.

Mother of student with SEN with a physical disability

Infrastructure and strategies to address participation are the two internal conditions that affect the participation of the students at school. The issue of school infrastructure affects the participation of the students at school. The issue of school infrastructures affects the participation of a student with a physical disability, as mentioned by one of the teachers during a Focus Group:

... he walks (with) a walker ... he is totally independent ... we still ... walk next to him because we are afraid that he can fall, because there are a lot of dirt paths and stones at our school, and we are afraid he might get hurt ...

Teacher

The children mentioned that not all of them participate in school activities; participation in these depends on the decision made by the teacher.

In summary, barriers to participation in the school may be external or internal. External barriers are linked to individual characteristics or aspects that relate to their homes and parents, while internal characteristics relate to infrastructure and strategies put in place by the teacher to address the participation of the students at school.

8.4 Opportunities to participation in the school

During the Focus Group with girls, one of them mentioned that once, when someone was being object of harassment at school, one of the students intervened to defend her from her aggressor and "call the teachers". The behaviour of this student is considered an opportunity for participation by the students at school, because it contributes to the creation of a safe environment and a protection net. Below is what the girl said:

Once I was at school and a girl asked me to give her my money or she would hit me, and a boy came and he defended me and went to call the teachers to defend me from the girl who wanted my money ...

Focus Group-Girls

The support received by this girl when she was being victim of harassment was the only opportunity identified in relation to participation at school.

9 Discussion

This case study was carried out at a school located in one of the seventeen municipalities of the department of Guatemala. This school is registered before the Special Education Direction –DIGEESP– of the Education Ministry, as an inclusive school. According to DIGEESP (2012), an inclusive school is one that follows the pedagogical proposal to address the diversity of the student body. In addition, the teachers have the support of itinerant pedagogical advisors. Based on stakeholder reports, both internal and external, two questions presented by this research were answered: 1. How do stakeholders understand and interpret inclusive education? And 2. What barriers and opportunities do stakeholders identify for an inclusive education system? The answers to these questions were inferred from stakeholder reports and observations during a visit to the school.

Based on this data, five perspectives were identified, which can be summarized as follows: stakeholders think that education is a right for all the population and believe it is essential to reduce the existing economic and social inequality; however, there are situations that make it difficult to achieve this goal in the same way for all. Furthermore, for education to be of quality, stakeholders need to be committed, work together and assume their responsibilities. It is necessary to continue with actions in favour of the segments of the population that were left out of the education system and strengthen the training of the education community to provide attention to students with very diverse characteristics.

Based on this, it can be inferred that at a conceptual level, stakeholders interpret inclusive education as the availability of a regular school that includes children with special education needs with or without disabilities. However, in the practise, stakeholders generally respond to ensure compliance with the right to an education not only of these children but also of children with diverse characteristics. The majority of stakeholders mention that the characteristics or living conditions of the population in general hinder the satisfaction of this right. It is interesting to observe that the same thing happened with respect to barriers to access, acceptance, and participation of the population in education. It would seem that when there are difficulties, the responsibility is attributed to a person, and rarely to the institutions. The actions put into practise and/or the decisions taken, frequently in an arbitrary fashion, contribute to a more distant education for populations with very diverse characteristics. This could have an impact on these segments of the population, leading them to believe that they failed because they were not able to access it or because they are so far away that it is unattainable and they don't deserve it.

Another issue to highlight and which is deemed important is the issue of diagnosis. According to stakeholders and observations made, diagnosis is not based on evidence, but responds to empirical processes. This does not provide answers but generates further questions like: what is the starting point for a diagnosis? Who is authorized to make one? Are these persons available for all the population? If not, what can be done? What road to take once a diagnosis has been made? What do you need in order to follow that route? And what impact does the diagnosis have if the indicated route cannot be followed or if the answer is empirical? Even more important: what route to follow when it is not a matter of a diagnosis (for example, pregnancies and maternity by minors)? Or, when is there an intersection of situations (for example, a child suffering from an alcoholic parent, negligence at home and an intellectual disability)?

This also related to the management of diversity, with special emphasis on the stakeholders when it relates to students with multiple special education needs or over-aged students. The internal stakeholders of the school mentioned that they do everything at their reach and that the support received from the pedagogical advisors has been very important, but they still feel that their competencies need strengthening or that there are situations, which they are not capable of solving. It would seem like there are situations in which a calling, patience and willingness are not sufficient to develop the learning skills of students with diverse characteristics. This suggests that there is a need to join efforts to respond to the question of how to provide tools to the education community. This is important because it is a challenge to work together and respond as a team, but also because it means becoming an institutional agent. That is, being a motor for change from their own area of reach, undertaking actions to ensure that education turns into the means to guarantee opportunities to help people reach their full potential, become autonomous and look for the common good; as we were taught by some of the stakeholders in this case study.