

HONDURAN TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH TRANSNATIONAL STUDENTS IN RURAL SCHOOLS

EXPERIENCIAS DE DOCENTES HONDUREÑOS CON ESTUDIANTES TRANSNACIONALES EN ESCUELAS RURALES

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Resumen: A pesar del aumento en las detenciones y deportaciones de niños, niñas y adolescentes migrantes centroamericanos en Estados Unidos y en México (González 2019; Flores et al. 2019), es poca la evidencia que existe acerca de su retorno a comunidades y escuelas de origen. Es por ello que, a través de un marco teórico enfocado en la voz del docente, este estudio preguntó: ¿Cuáles son las experiencias de los maestros hondureños con estudiantes transnacionales?, y ¿cómo dan sentido los maestros hondureños a las experiencias y conocimientos de los estudiantes transnacionales? Las metodologías utilizadas fueron: 1) cuestionarios grupales en 47 aulas; 2) 10 cuestionarios individuales a estudiantes transnacionales; y 3) 9 entrevistas semiestructuradas a maestros. Las respuestas revelaron que: 1) no cuentan con información acerca de las trayectorias de estudiantes transnacionales; 2) valoran positivamente los nuevos conocimientos que adquieren sobre los estudiantes migrantes; y 3) existe poca capacitación docente para responder a las necesidades educativas de estudiantes transnacionales. Los hallazgos sugieren mejorar los recursos que apoyen las prácticas de enseñanza para estudiantes transnacionales y las estrategias para interpretar sus trayectorias y facilitar su reintegración en el aula.

Palabras clave: estudiantes transnacionales; migración de retorno; formación docente; trayectorias transnacionales; Centroamérica.

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Abstract: With the recent rise in Central American child migrant apprehensions and deportations across the U.S. and Mexico (González 2019; Flores et al. 2019), there still exists little evidence about their return to their communities and schools. Through a teacher's voice framework, this study asked: What are Honduran teachers' experiences with transnational students? And, how do Honduran teachers make sense of transnational students' experiences and knowledge? The methodologies used were: 1) 47 classroom surveys; 2) 10 individual transnational student surveys, and; 3) 9 semi-structured teacher interviews. Teacher responses revealed that: 1) there is a lack of information on the trajectories of transnational students; 2) new knowledge about migrant students is well-valued among teachers, and; 3) there is minimal teacher training on transnational students and their educational needs. The findings call for improved resources to support teaching practices targeted toward meeting the needs of transnational students as well as strategies to help facilitate increased and successful classroom reintegration upon return.

Keywords: transnational students; return migration; teacher education; transnational trajectories; Central America.

Résumé : Avec l'augmentation, cette année, des appréhensions et des déportations d'enfants migrants d'Amérique centrale aux États-Unis et au Mexique (González 2019; Flores et al. 2019), il existe encore peu de preuves de leur retour communautés et écoles d'origine. Avec un cadre basé sur la voix des enseignants, cette étude a demandé: Quelles sont les expériences des enseignants honduriens avec les étudiants transnationaux? Et comment les enseignants honduriens interprètent-ils les expériences et les connaissances des étudiants transnationaux? Les méthodologies utilisées étaient les suivantes: 1) des questionnaires de groupe dans 47 salles de classe, 2) 10 enquêtes individuelles d'étudiants transnationaux et 3) 9 entretiens semi-structurés avec des enseignants. Les réponses des enseignants ont révélé: 1) ils ne disposent pas d'informations sur les trajectoires des étudiants transnationaux; 2) valoriser positivement les nouvelles informations qu'ils acquièrent sur les étudiants migrants; et 3) il y a peu de formation des enseignants pour répondre aux besoins éducatifs des étudiants transnationaux. Les résultats suggèrent d'améliorer les ressources qui soutiennent les pratiques d'enseignement pour les étudiants transnationaux et les stratégies pour interpréter leurs trajectoires et faciliter leur réintégration dans la classe.

Mots-clés : étudiants transnationaux ; migration de retour ; formation des enseignants ; trajectoires transnationaux ; Amérique Central.

Introduction

In Mexico, a growing field of scholarship has focused on the sharing, between the U.S. and Mexico, of students, referred to as transnational students (Hamann 2001; Zúñiga & Hamann 2006). These are students with educational, social and cultural experiences in more than one country, and that share «multiple regional contexts» (Zúñiga & Hamann 2008, 33). Now that more Central American families are migrating, taking their children out of school and across borders, the case of transnational Mexican students serves as an ideal case study with the wide range of migration patterns, volume of students involved, and the body of quantitative and qualitative research surrounding the phenomenon. In their initial studies, Hamann, Zúñiga, and Sánchez García, found a wide range of student backgrounds within Mexican schools: 1) U.S.-born students in Mexico; 2) students born in Mexico but with the majority of their educational experiences in the U.S., and; 3) students who fit somewhere in-between (2008). More recently, Roman González et al. (2016), observed two other types of migratory trajectories: 1) U.S.-born students, with educational experience in both countries, and returnees to the U.S., and; 2) US-born students circulating between the U.S. and Mexico. In all of the studies, the research teams identified that the students' migratory and educational trajectories often made invisible their previous socio-cultural and academic experiences, resulting in contexts where these students' specific needs or challenges, between school systems, languages, and nationalities, were not being met (Román González & Zúñiga 2014). Transnational students face a unique set of needs when in school to address the various cognitive, emotional, and psychological burdens they carry along from their migration experiences (Panting 2016).

While return migration has been posited to have wide reaching effects on the Honduran educational system (Gluckman 2019) there is little research addressing what this looks like in the lived realities of Central American, and specifically, Honduran, schools and their various actors. This is of particular concern as these numbers may be projected to rise in the coming years as a result of new U.S. anti-immigration laws and deportation practices (Gluckman 2019). In 2016, the Honduran government documented 10,652 children and adolescents who were repatriated to Honduras (Centro Nacional de Información del Sector Social 2016). Since that time, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol have seen a dramatic increase in migrants as a result of the migrant caravans, started in 2018, with more than 180,000 Honduran family members processed through August

of the 2019 fiscal year (Gonzalez 2019). There was also a 60 % increase from 2018 in the number of unaccompanied migrant children apprehended at the border with 72,973 registered cases (Gonzalez 2019). Additionally, changes in immigration policies in the U.S., the reinforcement of Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) and the border patrol, and the recent strategy where Mexico serves as a vertical border to retain and/or deport Central American migrants before they reach the border with the U.S., has resulted in a massive number of returns, either voluntarily or involuntarily, of Central American children and youth to their home countries (Cooke et al. 2019; Gramlinch & Noe-Bustamante 2019; Seelke 2019). As one of the poorest countries in the region, burdened by political, economic, and educational hardships, this study focuses on the particular experiences of teachers of transnational students in Honduran rural schools—addressing what similarities and differences might exist from those in Mexican schools. In this manner, the study acts as a response to the call for an expansion of scholarship studying the trajectories of transnational students in Central America.

Background

Educational context

Honduras holds an educational system that is amongst the lowest performing in Latin America, despite the government spending a large portion of its budget on education each year (Orozco & Valdivia 2017). Approximately 11 % of Hondurans are illiterate, though this number is higher in rural areas; and while 93 % of children ages 6-11 are enrolled in school, only half of those 12-14 years old are enrolled—approximately two-thirds in urban areas, and one-third in rural areas (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2016). As a result, the average educational attainment for Hondurans is four years, as compared to the world average of 12 years (Orozco & Valdivia 2017). Community-based schools through the Programa Hondureño de Educación Comunitaria (PROHECO) have been created in the past two decades to address issues of limited access to schooling in rural areas (Di Gropello & Marshall 2005); however, high dropout rates and low student attainment persist due to students' needing to seek employment to support their families (Gitter & Barham 2007). As discussed in Gunnarsson, Orazem,

and Sánchez (2006), poverty in Latin America often makes child labor a necessity, which has been shown to negatively impact student achievement.

On the other hand, research suggests that teachers play a role in improving educational quality if given training or incentives to increase efforts (Di Gropello 2005). Especially in rural schools where teacher training is more limited and teachers come with less qualifications (Di Gropello & Marshall 2011), transnational students returning to these areas are likely met with few, if any, reintegration resources and support. These barriers to quality education in Honduras are further complicated by regular teacher salary delays (Altschuler 2012), with public school teachers often experiencing four or more month's delay in receiving their paycheck (field notes, July 2018), potentially exacerbating a teacher's ability to gather more resources for their classroom.

Migration context

In Honduras, emigration has been going on since the Central American civil wars in the 1980s, and continued after 1998 with the destruction caused by Hurricane Mitch, leading to the extension of Temporary Protected Status designation to 60,000 Hondurans in the U.S. (Gluckman 2019; O'Connor et al. 2019). While the U.S. is often cited as the most common planned destination for Central American migrants (Hiskey et al. 2018), strong historical trends of South-South migration continue to exist for Honduran migrants (Flores Fonseca 2014). Some of the main reasons why families leave Honduras are poverty, violence, extortion, and forced recruitment by gangs. Honduras has the second highest poverty rates in the region, and the highest murder rate per capita (Central Intelligence Agency 2018). Consequently, many migrants seek out job and life opportunities, not only in the United States, but also in bordering countries such as Guatemala or Nicaragua, or those with higher GDP rates, such as Costa Rica and Belize.

Continued increases in migration from Central America to the U.S. in the past two decades has resulted in Honduran nationals and their, often foreign-born, children gaining substantive school experience outside of Honduras, fostering assumptions, habits, and levels of achievement which Honduras schools may not be ready to address. Developing strategies to serve this population may continue to grow in importance given the increased media attention and additional scrutiny Central American migration has received due to the appearance

of several large migrant caravans from Honduras to the U.S. starting in 2018 (Sieff & Partlow 2018). Before these so-called «caravans», migrants reported that their transit through Mexico was a crude and violent *via crucis* towards their American dream (Jones 2017). Some of the dangers included gang recruitment and killings, harassment, robbery and abuse from the Mexican police; trafficking of women and children by drug cartels, among others (Anguiano Téllez & Villafuerte Solís 2016). In order to help each other, and to protect women and children, migrants started using social media and phone applications to communicate with each other and gather at strategic points, to move across Mexico as a group (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte 2018). However, dangers within Mexico persist, especially as a consequence of the Programa Frontera Sur, in which Mexico received funds in order to detain, and deport Central American migrants before they reach the United States (Anguiano Téllez & Villafuerte Solís 2016). This cooperation resulted in the apprehension of over 38,000 unaccompanied minors and almost 104,000 people travelling as families during the fiscal year of 2018 (O'Connor et al. 2019). In the first nine months of fiscal year 2019, more than 363,000 migrants travelling in families were apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border, tripling the total number from the previous year (O'Connor et al. 2019). South-South migration trends have also shifted making some countries less viable options for Honduran migration or settlement. For example, Nicaragua's current political climate and Guatemala's drought, have resulted in growing numbers of outward migration from these countries (Kahn 2019; O'Connor et al. 2019).

Factors influencing transnational students' education

Transnational students have been found to «develop and maintain multiple relations—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political—that span borders» (Schiller et al. 1992, IX). As a result they are often educated within a 'culture of migration', which has been found to result in a decreasing emphasis on school achievement in favor of migration for economic opportunities or social mobility—commonly referred to as the substitution effect (de Hoyos Navarro et al. 2016; Dreby & Stutz 2011; Kandel & Massey 2002; Robles & Oropesa 2011). This substitution, often modeled for children and youth by parents who have migrated abroad, has been noted as a potential contributing factor to the decline in school enrollment from primary to secondary school in countries such as

Honduras (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2016; Davis 2016, 2018). Scholars have also highlighted how the economic (de Hoyos et al. 2016; Dreby & Stutz 2011; Robles & Oropesa 2011), cognitive, emotional, and psychological effects (Panting 2016) of migration influence transnational students' classroom experiences and likelihood of re-enrolling in school. Moreover, transnational students have been found to encounter administrative barriers when they attempt to re-enroll in school (Valdéz Gardea 2012), and experience academic and linguistic fractures, which might result in an increase of school dropouts (Román González & Zúñiga 2014; Sekiya & Ashida 2017). While a recent literature review outlined the wide array of sociopolitical, socio-emotional, socio-linguistic, and sociocultural factors which influence transnational students' current or future schooling experiences (Gluckman et al. 2021), the current study is the first to focus specifically on the experiences of Honduran teachers who have had transnational students' in their classrooms.

In Honduras, UNICEF has called for an increased focus on the reintegration of transnational youth, modelling this behavior by allocating resources to the Red Cross Honduras to provide psychosocial support as well as assisting with a «flexible education model» for children who are currently «excluded from the formal education system» (United Nations Children's Fund 2018, 9). Additionally, in their Annual Report, UNICEF indicated a partnership with the Dirección de Niñez, Adolescencia y Familia (DINAF), Honduras' national child protection agency, to support repatriation and reintegration services. Nonetheless, little information is available on teachers' specific responses to the growing number of repatriated youth, and on the strategies that the Honduran Secretary of Education would provide to support them in their efforts to educate transnational students in their classroom. This role currently is taken up by local non-governmental organizations, such as the one with which the current study took place.

Teachers' capacity to serve transnational students

Studies on transnational student experiences within the U.S.-Mexico context provide insight into existing gaps in teacher preparation, knowledge, and skills available to serve this population. In a multi-year study of U.S.-Mexican transnational students, researchers found a lack of pre- or in-service training provided to teachers as to how they could build on students' prior knowledge and

assets within the classroom (Hamann et al. 2008; Román González & Carrillo Cantú 2017; Sánchez García & Hamann 2016)—a practice that has been noted to be successful in welcoming immigrant students and increasing their educational outcomes (Moll et al. 2005). Mordechay and Alfaro (2019, 33) also advocate for the use of a prior knowledge assets approach employing a «culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy and [the] utilization of students’ previous experiences and cultural knowledge». Through these studies, it was found that both in the U.S. and in Mexico, teachers have limited planning time and support for English/Spanish-Language Learners (Gándara et al. 2003; Sánchez García 2007). Even when training workshops were delivered to Mexican teachers in response to transnational education, participants reported that discussions still tended to be general, rather than specific to transnational students (Sánchez García & Hamann 2016).

Mordechay and Alfaro’s (2019, 33) work, which focused directly on the binational context of transnational students in border regions, revealed that neither U.S. nor Mexican teachers were «prepared to build on the assets to teach ‘students we share’ across borders», citing a lack of «knowledge, disposition, and skills... to understand the binational contexts and difficult realities that students live as they attempt to navigate two educational systems». They argue for the need to develop *a global awareness* which includes «an understanding of sociocultural influences, biliteracy processes, authentic assessment, and culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum» (Mordechay and Alfaro 2019, 31). Additionally, it has been found that «approaches to education reform that do not honor the uniqueness, resiliency, cultural, and linguistic wealth of the SWS [students we share] are likely to fail» (Alfaro & Bartolomé 2017; Yosso 2005). As a result, researchers call for a «cultural, linguistic wealth, and community-based approach» to teacher training (Valenzuela 2016; Yosso 2005) that meets the needs of transnational students.

As noted in the Honduran education context above, teachers currently face diverse challenges with respect to meeting their student population including lack of training, ongoing professional development, and access to resources. While research has yet to highlight the experiences of teachers of transnational students in Honduran schools and how these might compare to those of Mexican and US teachers—a key contribution of the current study—these challenges engendered across the Honduran education system may create less than favorable environments and prospectively limited capacity for meeting the unique needs of transnational students.

Theoretical Framework

We draw from the framing of teacher voice (Fullan 2016; Hargreaves 2005; Kezar 2013) which allows teachers to understand and see their value in educational reforms and change. This framework has been proven necessary and important towards teachers taking ownership of curriculum change (Kirk & MacDonald 2010) and actively participating in educational reform conversations around topics of access, equity, and quality of education (Gozali et al. 2017). Teacher voice is used to supplement the qualitative data in this study to better understand what the data means in context of the population studied, and its implications for future research, policy proposals, and action.

In line with this theoretical framing, the researchers quoted the original participant language throughout this study to best retain the context of teachers' lived experiences, followed then by English translations. Two of the researchers, recognizing their positionality as white and westerners, would likely be unable to accurately represent the nuances of meaning, nor the context of specific phrasing; therefore, a third Hispanic researcher was invited to analyze and contextualize the teachers' opinions represented in this manuscript. Past studies have indicated the variety of support transnational students need when (re)integrating into the classroom (Catalano 2017; Hamann et al. 2008; United Nations Children's Fund 2018); therefore, we believe that the results of this study can serve as a first step towards determining what additional training, support, or resources teachers might need to meet the needs of transnational students in their classrooms.

Methodology

For this study, we focused on the experiences and perspectives of 47 rural educators in 11 schools which have Kindergarten to grade twelve students in the northern region of Honduras—a region with some of the highest percentages of child and youth migration. Our aim was to better understand what services and in-classroom knowledge teachers obtained about and from their transnational students, and how they capitalized these students' experiences in the classroom. As a result, we centered our observations on two key research questions: *What are Honduran teachers' experiences with transnational students? And, how do Honduran teachers make sense of transnational students' experiences and knowledge?*

To answer these, classroom-wide surveys were conducted, based on the 2008 International Migration, School Trajectories, and Poverty study in Nuevo León, Mexico which consisted of two questionnaires—one administered to the entire school and the other only given to transnational students (Hamann et al. 2008). This study emerged from discussions, regarding student migration and desertion, with teachers associated with the Professional Development School Support Program (PDSSP), which focuses on teacher-training for rural Honduran schools. Through PDSSP, we selected 11 schools based on need using quantitative data about enrollment, class size, and socioeconomic status of the community, among other criteria. All schools were located in one city in Northern Honduras, which is reportedly a high migrant-sending area (Centro Nacional de Información del Sector Social 2016), and were visited and surveyed during pre-scheduled visits. In total, we conducted 47 general surveys and 10 individual surveys to transnational students. We also conducted nine follow-up semi-structured interviews with seven teachers and two principals who had current or past experience with transnational students in their classroom.

The surveys were conducted during the regular school day throughout a two week period in July, 2018. Prior to administering the survey, the research team explained the survey process and purpose to the 47 teachers. During this talk, teachers showed confidence in their knowledge of their students' backgrounds. In all but one case, teachers knew which of their students had migratory experience prior to administering the survey in front of their class. At seven of the 11 schools visited, teachers expressed that there were no transnational students in their schools. To prove that knowledge, we asked teachers to read out loud the first part of the survey, including «Do any of you speak another language besides Spanish?» «Were any of you born in the United States?»¹ and «Have any of you attended school in the United States?»² The teachers then fill in any affirmative responses themselves; this helped us to gather data regarding students' transnational experience, as well as teachers' reactions and their knowledge gained from the process.

During the general survey, teachers marked down the attendance for the day and the grade-level being surveyed. Then, they asked students three questions noted above. Teachers noted the number of students who raised their hands for the first two questions, then wrote down the names of any students who indicated that they had also studied in the United States. After completing the survey at the first school, the protocol was modified, in response to teacher

advice, to additionally ask: Has anyone lived or studied outside of Honduras? This change yielded more varied and informative results than the initial query.

With the first survey application, we were able to identify two students with transnational school experience. With the changes made, eight more affirmative cases were found. These last ones revealed alternative migration patterns such as South-South between Central American countries and North-South from the U.S. to Honduras, pointing towards a more holistic view of transnational experiences in rural Honduran schools, than previously disclosed.

After completing the general survey with the class, teachers pulled aside 10 students who identified as transnational (having lived or studied outside of Honduras), to complete the second survey, which asked questions about their migratory experience. A member of the research team watched the rest of the class while the teacher met with the identified students in a separate and private area; this allowed for transnational students to answer personal questions in a more comfortable way. None of the team members took part in the individual interviews; however, the teachers were interviewed right after they had talked to each student, to take notes, so that the information coming from the teacher was fresh. The ten students responded to questions such as: Where were you born? Where did you study? Which grades did you complete there? Did you stop speaking Spanish in school?, and Do you speak English/Spanish well?, indicated by marking a *yes* or *no* box. Supplementary information and conversations provided teachers with additional information regarding the students' experiences, potentially aiding the teacher in understanding 'why' students had migrated from and back to Honduras.

Once the ten transnational students completed their individual surveys, seven classroom teachers were interviewed regarding their thoughts about the survey and the results. These semi-structured interviews (Corbin & Strauss 2008; Creswell 2007) lasted approximately three to five minutes in length and were recorded pending teachers' permission. The following questions were asked: In general, what did you think about the survey? Was there anything surprising about the result, or something you did not know before asking your students? and What do you think the value of this survey is and knowing your students' migration background? In addition, field notes (Emerson et al. 1995) were used to mark down details about additional interviews and information. We added two interviews with school principals because their schools had received several transnational students in the past.

Data analysis

The data from this study was compiled from the nine interviews with teachers and principals regarding current or past transnational students. Eight of these interviews were conducted in person using a recording device and transcribed afterwards. One interviewee declined to have their voice recorded, and instead the researcher recorded a brief summary of the answers on the recording device immediately after the interview was finished. To follow identity protection guidelines, all teachers' and students' names were changed to pseudonyms.

After the interviews were transcribed, the results were separated based on the responses of the three questions asked, and coded for common emerging themes. We identified three main response categories: 1) what teachers knew or did not know about their transnational student's experiences 2) how teachers responded to new knowledge about their students' backgrounds and; 3) teachers opinions about their training on transnational education. These results are further discussed in the following paragraphs.

Findings

«No es algo de extrañarse»: Teachers' prior knowledge about transnational students

In the interviews, four out of seven teachers knew about their current students' transnational backgrounds, while the other three declared that they were not aware they had transnational students in their classes prior to the survey. Those who had previously worked with transnational students used the interview to discuss what information they knew about former students and their migration experiences.

Teachers from Escuela Puente de Olivera explained this knowledge in a variety of ways. For example, teacher Juana said that she *más o menos había cuestionado a los niños sobre estos temas* («more or less had questioned the children about these topics»). In her interview, she indicated that she already knew of the only case in her class. She explained *la única niña que tengo que nació aquí en Honduras pero migró para España y luego regresó* («the only girl I have was born here in Honduras but migrated to Spain and then returned»). Similarly, teacher Kelsi said *para mí es algo normal. No es algo de extrañarse* («it is fairly normal for me. It is not very surprising»). She reasoned that *a nosotros a veces nos exigen ese tipo*

de encuestas («sometimes we are required to give this type of survey»). Another teacher from this school, Beatriz, replied *sí, ya lo sabía* («yes, I already knew») when asked whether she had prior knowledge of her students' transnational experiences. While Juana and Beatriz did not mention why or how they had specifically questioned their students, Kelsi stated that her discovery of transnational students came from a survey she administered in the beginning of the year asking *¿cuántos alumnos hay, cuántos alumnos viven aquí en el sector, cuántos fuera...?* («how many students are there, how many students live here in the sector, how many outside...?»). Kelsi's answer might suggest that she gained her knowledge accidentally through a student's response to the standardized questions that had been required by the local educational authorities, rather than explicitly asking about transnational students, as was the case in this study's survey.

Teachers' prior knowledge also differed in terms of specificity, from more general knowledge of where students had been to more detailed specifics about their migration journeys. Liliana spoke in detail about one of her students' past experiences commenting that *tuvimos en primer grado un niño, hace como tres años, pero luego la mamá pidió traslado y ya no supe de él. Y tuvo el caso también de una niña que era extranjera, una mexicana* («We had a boy in first grade, about three years ago, but his mom asked to transfer him and after that I didn't know anything about him. I also had a girl student who was a foreigner, a Mexican»). Kelsi also spoke at length about two former students, explaining that *la mamá de esta niñas, que son guatemaltecas, es porque la señora se fue para allá, supuestamente quiso pasar y llegó hasta Guatemala y ahí se quedó trabajando, ahí tuvo sus niñas y luego se las mandó a su mamá para que se las cuide, que son las dos niñas que tengo. Ya tengo dos años de tenerlas y ya están en Honduras* («These girls are Guatemalan and their mother left, she wanted to cross, but she only got to Guatemala and stayed there to work, and then she sent the girls to her mother to watch them... but I've had them for two years and they are now in Honduras»).

The variability of prior knowledge could imply that even if there is a formal survey or processes undertaken in Honduran schools for teachers to learn about their students' backgrounds and trajectories, that it is implemented with varied fidelity. Rather, the fact that three of the four teachers who knew about students' transnational experiences prior to the survey were all from the same school (Puente de Olivera) may suggest that some schools or communities may have adopted informal means of questioning students about their experiences. While these teachers did not speak about how they utilized this information,

it may be that having a more detailed understanding of their transnational students' backgrounds could inform strategies that these teachers have or could implement to support their students' success. In addition, other teachers' responses indicated that specific information may often be unavailable regarding students' pasts, as well as what happens to them when they disappear or migrate. This may suggest that the very knowledge of students' backgrounds is a necessary first step in creating an environment where transnational students can be appropriately supported.

«Yo pude aprender que...»: How teachers respond to new knowledge about transnational students

For teachers who learned new information about their students' backgrounds through the survey, several mentioned how this new knowledge is valuable to them. One example comes from teacher Gabriela's conversation with her student who had lived in Nicaragua until age four. Gabriela said *solo pensaba que él estudiaba en Nicaragua pero no que sabía otro tipo de idioma y esta encuesta me permitió conocer que, además del idioma español, sabe otro tipo de lenguaje* («I only thought he studied in Nicaragua, but I didn't know that he knew another language and this survey allowed me to learn that, besides Spanish, he knows another language»). In her self-reflection on the knowledge she gained, Gabriela continued, saying *yo pude aprender que él estudiaba francés y así él puede ayudarles a sus compañeritos a aprender lo básico del francés* («I was able to learn that he studied French, so now he can help his classmates to learn the basics of French»). Gabriela expressed that her student's additional language capabilities could be employed as an asset in her classroom, placing value on her discovery as a prospective learning opportunity for her other students.

Another teacher, Lorena, also had a student who had studied and lived in Nicaragua. She said she was surprised to learn that her student *solo estuvo un mes en preparatoria y luego se vino un mes a hacer la preparatoria, o sea, que él no vivió mucho tiempo allí, solo hasta los cuatro años* («he only spent a month in preschool [in Nicaragua] and then came for a month to do preschool [in Honduras], so he did not spend much time there, only four years»). Later in the interview, Lorena indicated that the learning gap her student had due to only completing two months of preschool was likely correlated with the student's bad behavior in class. This provided her with new knowledge about her student's educational

background which she could prospectively use to inform her approach to working with this student in the future.

Several other teachers expressed that through the administration of the survey, they learned useful information about students' backgrounds. Liliana spoke about one student, mentioning *no sabía que el niño estaba estudiando inglés hasta ahora* («I did not know that the child was studying English until now»). While this student did not have transnational experience, Liliana was able to learn new information related to her student's background. Unlike teacher Gabriela, however, Liliana did not elaborate on the value of this knowledge, only stating her surprise to learn about the student's enrollment in an English program. She only mentioned this student at the very end of her interview after speaking in more detail about her past student's experience migrating to Mexico, prospectively indicating a newly emerging understanding of the value of students' backgrounds on a teacher's practice. Another teacher, from Escuela Puente de Olivera, a primary school, added that from the survey, she learned about her student's family life. She described, *tengo una alumna que dice que el papá la llevó, él es coyote -el papá pasa gente-, pero solamente la llevó y la trajo* («I have a student who says her dad is a 'coyote'—he smuggles people—but he only took her and brought her back»). Again, this student did not have transnational educational experience, however the information gained could be relevant to the teacher in understanding her students' home life. Teachers' responses demonstrated that the background of the students, whether they migrate, north or south, or are learning something new outside of schools, is important to understand students' family interactions and dynamics, their migratory and educational trajectories, and their individual needs. Additionally, teachers agreed that knowing their students' assets, like being able to speak another language, or the challenges they have faced such as not finishing a complete year in a single school, could help them to prepare their classes better, either to use the transnational student as a helper, or to implement different teaching strategies to integrate those who were behind.

«Me da una pauta de cómo debo enseñar»: Resources for teaching practices

In addition to valuing the new knowledge about their students, most teachers agreed that learning from their students would help them to maximize their potential in their classrooms. For example, teacher Juana, argued that learning

about her students experiences, *es muy importante porque así me da una pauta de cómo debo de enseñar o qué debo de enseñar, o cómo debo de tratar a los niños que vienen de otros países que regresan a nuestro país* («it is very important, because it gives me a guide as to how I should teach or what I should teach, or how I should treat the children who come from other countries who return to our country»). Juana discussed how in asking the student about his or her trajectory, provided a moment for self-reflection regarding her own pedagogy towards transnational students. Another teacher, Yessica, agreed with Juana's sentiments, saying it was *bastante significativo* («very significant») to learn that her third grade student *no pudo entrar en ningún centro educativo de Estados Unidos* («was not able to enter into any school in the U.S.») even though the student had spent several years living there. Yessica suggested that this information was significant because her student *entra [a la clase] de incógnita* («entered [class] incognito»), or with a hidden background, despite only being educated in Honduras. Yessica's earlier reflections focused on her first year of experience working in PROHECO schools after working for seven years in other systems, stating that compared to relatively normal experiences in previous schools, *la experiencia que [ha] tenido... [allí] es bastante baja la educación; entonces, sí hay que reforzar esa parte* («the experience [she] had... the education there is very low, so it's important to reinforce this part»), presumably referring to the surprising information she learned in the survey. When combined, with reflection on her student's lack of preparatory school experience in the U.S., she may be linking such experiences to the lower education levels found in her PROHECO school, illuminating possible future connections between hidden experiences and educational success of her students.

Second grade teacher Paula from Escuela Diamante Torres also summarized why learning about student's backgrounds is important, stating that the survey *le ayud[ó] a saber más sobre esa área donde [ella] está trabajando* («help[ed] her know that area better that [she's] working in»). She didn't know about her student's prior experience in Mexico before the survey, but afterwards revealed that the information *es muy importante a saber por qué... a veces los niños entran la clase, pero [los docentes] no sabemos dónde han estado los estudiantes, ellos solo aparecen* («was really good to know because...sometimes kids come into her classroom, but [the teachers] don't know where [the students] have been, they just show up»). She added that this knowledge can *también ayudarla a conocer mejor a sus alumnos* («also help her know her students better»). This teacher's response suggests that teachers like to know about their students and try to relate to them personally. When combined with Juana's response, there is potential for use of

prior knowledge to improve teacher-student relationships and improve tailored teaching practices.

However, not all teachers interviewed expressed an understanding of what to do with their knowledge of transnational students' experiences. Balbina for example, stressed the importance of raising awareness and finding support for teachers who want to support transnational students in their classes, *se dan cuenta otros países de cuantos niños se van de los centros educativos, por qué razón se van. Una de las cosas es no tener trabajo, otra es a veces sus padres uno vive con él y el otro se ha ido del país también* («other countries must realize how many children go to schools, and why they leave. One reason is lack of work, another is sometimes they live with one parent and the other has left for another country»). Balbina discussed the value of disclosing the information discovered in the survey as a way of teachers' learning the truth behind the migratory experiences of their students. Balbina also noted at another point in the interview that the government or news is not always truthful and might not accurately report numbers, and that teachers may be more reliable informants of students' lived realities as they are the ones supporting them day-to-day in schools. Balbina's focus on the government's responsibility in providing truthful information may suggest that she places responsibility with the government for providing tools and information to support teachers with transnational students, with accurate news reports being an important first step to addressing the deeper problems teachers and transnational students face.

Honduran teachers are aware that, as global education trends shifts from lecture-centered to student-centered (Samarji & Hooley 2015), their epistemology might be better informed by knowledge of their students' transnational experience as a means to better re-integrate them into the classroom and serve other unique needs. Nonetheless, Honduran teaching methods continue to be primarily lecture-based or full of copying and recitation, suggesting that transnational students' classroom experience may be incompatible with the Honduran teaching style, requiring action and training for teachers to be able to bridge this difference in experiences.

Discussion and Recommendations

After administering the surveys in 47 classrooms, 10 affirmative cases were found of transnational students, two with experience living in the United States,

and eight additional cases with experience in Belize, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Spain. One of the key limitations of this study is that the results rely on a convenient sample. In other words, the results cannot be generalized to all return students in Honduras; however, we observed some similarities with case studies in Mexico as well as identified experiences that are particular to Honduran teachers which contribute to migration and education studies and warrant future exploration. Thus, we recognize that the application of our findings about teachers' knowledge must coincide with further research on why there were few affirmative cases in the surveyed schools, as well as why the impact of return migration is not visible or felt as strongly as expected within schools. Addressing the question of lack of successful enrollment must occur simultaneously with beginning to interrogate what information from our study can be used to best serve this population. Therefore, several of our recommendations focus on improving information and understanding of this student population and the challenge of locating them.

Another limitation was that because of the previously built relationships between the research team and all participants, we did not need to set time apart for trust building purposes; however, future researchers need to be aware that in order to gain some acquaintance level with teachers and students, considerable time is required. As a result, the research team posits that the working relationship provided a venue for greater honesty in teachers' participation and answers. An additional limitation was that the team members were not present for the individual interviews with transnational students; therefore, it could be inferred that some of the answers from the teachers' interviews might not be complete or might be biased. It is recommended to have at least one team member recording or accompanying the conversation with transnational students to triangulate the results and to gain a better idea of teacher-student interactions.

Of the 47 classrooms surveyed, the nine teachers interviewed revealed a variety of findings. Firstly, the migratory trajectories of Honduran transnational students are varied, their return is not only north-south, but also south-north or south-south. Secondly, just like in Mexico, transnational students are invisible to the country, communities, and schools (Román González & Zúñiga 2014). While some teachers discovered transnational students through informal methods or accidental disclosure, there are no formal surveys to follow transnational students' migratory and educational trajectories; as a result, there are no databases either. Third, most teachers had a general idea of their students' migratory trajectories, however, they did not know the specifics, like the reasons

for migrating, their experiences during the migration, why they had returned, and what knowledge students had brought back with them, with the exception of teachers speaking about former students. Fourth, Honduran teachers found great value in their students' experiences and trajectories; not only to help other students with language activities, but also to reflect upon their own teaching strategies for an inclusive pedagogy. Fifth, similar to Mexican schools (Hamann et al. 2008), Honduran schools lack further information and support to assist transnational students in their transitions between countries, languages, cultures, and schools.

While many of the teachers argued that knowing their students' migratory and educational trajectories motivated them to inform and improve their future teaching practices, their comments were mostly general. Their lack of specificity may suggest that in order to understand teachers' experiences with transnational students, the researchers may need to continue expanding the survey and interview questions to accommodate perspectives that focus on past students, providing a clearer understanding of how and why they learned about these students, and how these past experiences might influence future pedagogy and classroom practices. Additionally, as studies in Mexican schools suggest, there is a need for complementary research focusing on child-centered interviews and parent interviews to further illuminate return migration and education experiences in Honduras—as students and parents are themselves experiencing migration and can therefore provide unique perspectives into the child's needs. Indeed, what teachers did not say can be as influential as what teachers do say in understanding the value of prior knowledge and how to best gain information about teachers' experiences moving forward. We recommend that future research ask more pointed questions towards pedagogical strategies that teachers currently employ or would like support with to meet the needs of transnational students.

These findings are important as recent international policies and media attention may result in a projected rise in transnational families returning to Honduras in the coming years. For example, Temporary Protected Status allowed Honduran migrants to temporarily reside and gain work authorization in the United States following the destruction of much infrastructure in Honduras during and after Hurricane Mitch (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2018). Recently, this program has come under threat of revocation, and the possibility remains that the program will not be extended in the future, in which case the eliminated status has the potential

to impact 60,000 Hondurans families (Agencia EFE 2018; Gluckman 2019). Additionally, in 2018, about 163,000 family members were apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border—the highest number of family members since 2012 (Bialik 2019)—which may indicate growing numbers of involuntary return.

However, as one teacher mentioned, deportation is not the only form of return, there are also other types of voluntary return. With return migration, schools will prospectively face a large uptick in enrollment, requiring greater resources, and requiring teachers to work with more students despite the lack of databases, research, infrastructure, materials and training for learning about and teaching transnational students. Additionally, as the teachers Balbina and Beatriz mentioned in their interviews, government and media portrayal of these numbers is not always accurate; therefore, providing accurate information about transnational students becomes even more important when considering that there are only a few non-governmental organizations currently working on reintegration efforts, and there is a limited presence or visibility of transnational students within the surveyed Honduran schools.

Overall, further research is needed to understand the migratory and educational trajectories of transnational students in Honduran schools. What is clear from this research is that more attention should be directed towards the population of returned students who are absent from Honduran schools, in addition to further supporting Honduran educators so they can best meet the needs of transnational students and are willing to learn about, from, and for them. While some positive first steps have been taken by organizations such as UNICEF and the Red Cross (United Nations Children’s Fund 2018), more consistency and partnership on the governmental level is needed to address the anticipated rise in transnational students in Honduran schools, such as: 1) providing real and timely information about return and other types of migration in different media; 2) starting public databases that visualize where these students are and where they are coming from; 3) starting dialogues with schools in countries that have more experience on the inclusion of transnational students to learn strategies that can be implemented in Honduran classrooms; 4) starting teacher training on transnational education and inclusion strategies; 5) using transnational students’ funds of knowledge in the classroom to benefit students who are monolingual and mononational, or without any migratory experience, and; 6) creating follow-up strategies to capture and learn about transnational students trajectories.

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Notes

- ¹ After the first school was visited, this question was broadened to ask «Were any of you born outside of Honduras?»
- ² After the first school was visited, this question was broadened to ask «Have any of you attended school in a country other than Honduras? »