**Youth Violence and Safety**

**APRIL 8, 2021**

**Focus:** UNESCO’s Open Schools Program implemented in several Latin American countries and Fundación Reintegra’s Life and Work Skills Program based in Mexico City; both focus on neighborhoods with high poverty, violence, and crime rates

**Goal:** Identify each program’s successes and challenges with a view to transferability

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**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

Open Schools was started by UNESCO in 2000, adopted by Brazilian Ministry of Education in 2004, and by 2010 implemented across 4,000 schools, serving c. 4 million Brazilians. Other examples include Guatemala where it was implemented in 220 schools.

Schools become attractive weekend community spaces for children, adolescents, and adults to engage in sports, artistic and cultural activities.

- Important to invite the community in, building comfort with space and each other
- Activity leaders are typically community members, unless special expertise is required
- Safety provided informally by community’s knowledge of its own members
- Emphasis on:
  - Intergenerational exchange
  - Respect for diversity
  - Youth leadership development, as rights holders in charge of their own lives
- Focus intentionally not on additional formal schooling, but on alternative recreational, information, and training activities

**Successes include:**

- Greater social inclusion, sense of belonging
- Reduced drop-out rates
- Greater community involvement in schools
- Less violence in schools, community, and homes

**Advantages include low program cost and ease of replication across contexts due to flexible structure.**

- Cheap (c. $1-2/participant/month)
- Impact measurement includes levels of violence in the school and surroundings

**Fundación Reintegra’s program started as an employability program in 2008, but became a life and work skills program by 2013 as they realized life skills were as or more important than the labor skills.**

**Three stages develop skills and entrepreneurship:**

1. Learning silk screen printing or baking
2. “Lab” where students make and sell products
3. Entrepreneurship stage, foundation-supported with small ($30) loans and use of equipment

The program focuses on reflection and community, as well as goal setting and planning.

- Emphasizes positive role models, rather than drug dealers most visible in community
- Participants begin in offset cycles; older participants mentor newer ones

**Successes including building life and labor skills:**

- Greater self-esteem, sense of achievement
- Better teamwork and individual habits
  - E.g. discipline, responsibility, punctuality
- New financial understanding
- Entrepreneurial mindset
- Skills in printing or baking

**Small scale emphasizes personal connection, but it leads to high cost and may pose scaling challenge.**

- 50-80 learners/year, in groups of 12 who come 3 times/week
- Expensive ($30/student/month)

**Key considerations for both interventions include:**

- Private sector involvement, financially and as skilling and pathways partner
- Partnerships with other organizations, government actors to share resources and scale
- Impact measurement should consider:
  - Telling human stories, not just numbers
  - Measuring costs avoided as well as successes (appeal to funders)

**Education can play a key role in violence reduction, which requires:**

- Support from government leaders
- Buy-in from school directors and teachers
- Development of community curriculum for safety

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**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES**

- “Life and Work Skills Program: Community Prevention Centers” by Sofia Frech*

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