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# fundación paraguaya



## UNESCO-UNEVOC PROMISING PRACTICES

Fundación Paraguaya's Self Sustainable Schools

Turning learning into earning and saving

2017

# Fundación Paraguaya's Self-Sufficient Schools

## Context

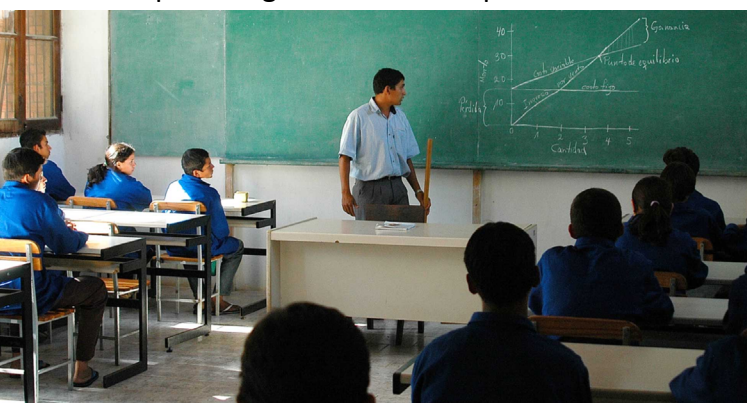
In Latin America secondary school drop-out rates are high, partly because many youth feel that the type of education they receive at school does not offer any guarantee of future employment (UNESCO, 2015). But those who drop out lack the skills required to find stable employment and are often unable to enter into further training programmes (World Bank, 2016).

School drop outs therefore often find themselves trapped in unstable informal employment or, worse, are unable to find any work at all. One fifth of the people aged 15-24 in Latin America are neither in school nor working, and these youth tend to be from the poorest and most disadvantaged segments of the population (World Bank, 2016).

## The initiative and its impact

Recognizing the need for practical training that gives youth the skills to find employment or become self-employed, Fundación Paraguaya established the Self-Sufficient School model, providing low-income youth with opportunities to 'learn by doing, while earning and saving'.

Under this model, the schools offer the officially-recognized secondary school curriculum as well as training in practical skills such as growing vegetables, raising livestock and crafting furniture. The Self-Sufficient Schools go beyond the type of training provided by conventional vocational training programmes, however, by also providing real-life marketplace contexts that



Half the time in the classroom... (© Fundación Paraguaya)

## Overview

<i>Implemented by:</i>	Fundación Paraguaya, since 2003
<i>Where:</i>	Paraguay
<i>Theme:</i>	Youth employment; Entrepreneurship
<i>Funding:</i>	Initially donor-supported. The first school became self-sustaining in 2007.
<i>Status:</i>	As of 2017, 3 schools in Paraguay and 45 affiliated schools abroad.

*Under the Self-Sufficient Schools model, Fundación Paraguaya not only educates rural and low-income youth, but transforms them into entrepreneurs who can potentially lift themselves and their families out of poverty.*

*In such schools, students learn the skills, knowledge and attitudes to become entrepreneurs and they also apply what they learn in a real-life context, where they produce marketable goods and services. The incomes generated in this way go towards school operating costs, thus enabling the schools to become self-sustaining.*

enable students to come into contact with real customers. For instance, students studying hotel management manage a real hotel, located on the school premises, that receives real clients. In such contexts, students put their classroom learning into practice and develop business know-how, while also learning about customer needs and how to provide the kinds of goods and services consumers are willing to pay for.

Second and third year students can also participate in the 'entrepreneurship education' programme in which they learn how to set up and run their own microenterprises and cooperatives, prepare business plans, apply for micro-loans and manage their finances.

By selling the goods and services that the students produce, the schools generate incomes that allow them to become self-sustaining. As a result, the schools do not rely on government subsidies or long-term donor funding. The process of scaling

up and becoming self-sustaining takes time, however. The 'San Francisco' school, the first Self-Sufficient School, was launched in 2003 and became self-sustaining in 2007.

As of 2017, Fundación Paraguaya runs three schools in Paraguay that follow the Self-Sufficient School model, and is providing technical assistance to 45 schools in Latin America and Africa that have adopted the model.

Since 2003, 762 students have graduated from the three Paraguayan schools. Data collected from the 'San Francisco' agricultural school indicate that all of the school's graduates were 'productively engaged' within four months of graduating. Furthermore, many of the graduates who have returned to their home communities have passed on their new skills to family and community members, which has increased productivity and led to new income-generating initiatives for those communities, thus helping to break the cycle of poverty.

## Insights

### Ensuring access to education for low-income youth

The Self-Sufficient Schools target youth from low-income families. Although the students pay fees, those fees are low. For example, in 2016 the 'San Francisco' agricultural school charged an annual registration fee of 100,000 Paraguayan guarani (PYG), about 21 USD, and an additional fee of PYG 80,000 to help cover the costs of each student's food, boarding and school supplies. If students lack the funds to pay the fees, they can apply for scholarships or join work-study programmes. Students are able to defray up to half of their fees by doing weekend work on the farm, and they are encouraged to bring their own tools (machetes, shovels, hoes, etc.) so as to keep costs down.

### Selecting the most suitable candidates

Fundación Paraguaya has developed a well thought-out selection process to ensure that it selects those who will benefit most from the programme. Accordingly, it pre-selects youth (aged 15 to 18) who have completed Grade 9, who exhibit a strong work ethic and a positive attitude,

and who meet the health criteria for life in a boarding school.

These pre-selected youth then participate in a two-week initiation course that introduces the potential students to the programme while also further evaluating their suitability for it. The course includes classes that give all applicants a better chance of passing the entrance exam, which is held at the end of the course. Students are selected on the basis of their exam scores and on the results of the evaluation of their interest in and aptitude for the practical activities on which the programme is based.

### Motivating students to succeed

At Fundación Paraguaya's model 'San Francisco' school, students earn a small commission from the sale of the goods and services they provide. They also receive a share of the income from the sale of the goods produced by their own microenterprises and from participating in the student cooperative. This income is one of the factors that motivate the students to pay attention in school and learn the skills that will enable them to succeed in running viable businesses.

### Creating a community of responsible citizens

The Self-Sustaining Schools are designed to become self-contained communities. They are boarding schools, where the students, both male and female, must learn to get along with other students, who come from diverse cultural backgrounds and from differing regions. While most students are from rural areas, a conscious effort is made to include some students from urban areas so as to foster intercultural



... the other half on the ground (© Fundación Paraguaya)

communication. Living in these school communities, students learn a range of citizenship skills that are crucial in enabling them to become responsible members of society.

### **Providing training in locally-relevant subjects**

The training offered by the schools is decided based on the products and services that are marketable in the area. For instance, the 'San Francisco' school's proximity to Asunción made it possible to develop viable businesses related to eco-tourism. Accordingly, the school developed training programmes in hotel management and sustainable agriculture.

### **Sourcing professional input to ensure graduate employability**

The Self-Sufficient Schools consult with private sector entities to learn about the local market and the particular skills the schools need to teach their students, so as to ensure that their graduates have the skills that are in demand and they are therefore employable.

### **Seeking passionate staff and supporting them**

The schools seek staff who are, above all, committed to the philosophy of education for self-reliance and entrepreneurship in technical education and are passionate about the Sustainable Schools model, but who also have the capacity to balance the schools' income-

generating and educational objectives. In particular they seek those who are knowledgeable about producing and selling goods and services, with the skills to instil the entrepreneurial spirit in others, and who can combine traditional subjects with experiential learning, while having a positive attitude towards youth. The schools support their staff through providing an induction course and peer mentoring, and keep them motivated through teambuilding activities and opportunities to participate in international forums and to provide consulting services to other schools.

### **Looking forward**

Fundación Paraguaya's goal for the end of 2017 is to have 50 schools worldwide following the Self Sufficient Schools, five more than in 2016.

### **References**

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## **Learn more about the Fundación's Paraguaya's Self-Sufficient Schools**

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You will also find more references on the initiative in our website at: [http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/go.php?q=PP\\_FP](http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/go.php?q=PP_FP)



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