

Exporting a Model for Replication

The Fundación Paraguaya's San Francisco Agricultural School provides a high-quality, relevant education, at virtually no cost to students, to prepare poor rural youth to overcome poverty. The school runs a number of on-campus rural enterprises, which generate enough income to cover 100% of the school's operating costs, including depreciation, and provide hands-on experience for students to acquire in-demand technical, entrepreneurial, and financial skills they need to find good jobs or create their own small enterprises.

Achievements to Date and Plans for the Future

Fundación Paraguaya seeks to spread the benefits of its model as widely as possible by exporting the model to partner institutions. Fundación Paraguaya's goal is to facilitate the creation of 50 financially self-sufficient schools by 2017. At present, there are 21 institutions that have taken concrete actions to implement the model; they range from schools which have prepared business plans and are looking for financing to implement the model to those which are in the second or third year of full operation.

In the future, Fundación Paraguaya plans to offer training courses for school teachers and administrators. It is also developing an accreditation system for financially sufficient schools to encourage and reward the adoption of best practices and create a network of like-minded institutions.

Selecting a Scale-up Strategy

For Fundación Paraguaya, scaling up means exporting the financially self-sufficient school model to other organizations, within Paraguay, throughout Latin America, and around the world. Its strategy is to seek partner organizations that are committed to the core aspects of the model but are prepared to adapt the school's training curriculum and income-generating activities to the realities of their particular markets. FP decided to work with partner institutions to replicate the schools, rather than establish new financially self-sufficient schools of its own, for various reasons. The concept of the financially self-sufficient school is relatively new, and FP felt that local institutions were generally in the best position to convince authorities, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders of the merits of this approach. Additionally, the model's successful implementation requires that school personnel understand and adapt their course content and teaching and production to local market conditions; local institutions should have an advantage in doing so. Finally, exporting the model to partner institutions allows FP to leverage its resources and scale up the model more rapidly and in more countries and institutions.

Putting Strategy into Practice

Promoting the benefits of the market-driven sustainable school model.

Fundación Paraguaya believed that, in order to encourage others to action, it first needed to invest in promoting its model by raising awareness of the school's model and providing information to help people understand its key features and objectives. To achieve this, in early 2006, Fundación Paraguaya helped establish "Teach A Man To Fish," a sister non-profit organization, based in London. A key objective in establishing a separate organization in London was to establish contacts and relationships outside of the Americas, including in Africa, Asia, and the European Union.

The mission of Teach A Man To Fish is to promote “education that pays for itself” and develop a network of institutions around the world interested in the financially self-sufficient school model. The organization shares news and information through its website and holds competitions to identify entrepreneurial teachers and an annual international conference on sustainable education. The conference serves as a forum for providing information on the model, monitoring uptake, and feedback on how to better support the replication process. Fundación Paraguaya also promotes the self-sufficient school model through its other networks, such as ACCIÓN International and Junior Achievement Worldwide.

Provide tools and guides for replication.

Meanwhile, in order to make information about running a self-sufficient school available in an accessible, adaptable format, Fundación Paraguaya and Teach A Man To Fish have developed and posted a series of nine online, open-access “how to” guides for setting up financially self-sufficient schools known as “School in a Box.” These guides take the reader from “Getting Started: An Introduction to Financially Self-Sufficient Schools” to evaluating an organization before starting a school, organizing the school, generating school income, educating young entrepreneurs, student life, writing a business plan for a self-sufficient school, and seeking financing to cover start-up and operating costs until the school becomes self-sufficient.

Provide technical assistance.

Fundación Paraguaya has found that the most challenging aspect of replicating its model is identifying partners who are not only committed to the concept of financial sustainability but are prepared to achieve it. For this reason, Fundación Paraguaya provides technical assistance to replicating institutions upon request (as a fee-for-service or with donor funding) to supplement the “School in a Box” guides. In addition to helping schools prepare business plans, Fundación Paraguaya assists organizations in evaluating their institutional strengths and weaknesses, and in designing “road maps” for increasing transparency, strengthening governance, and taking other steps to position themselves to adopt the financially self-sufficient model.

In some cases, Fundación Paraguaya makes resident advisors available to help institutions implement the school model. It also encourages visits to its model school in Paraguay where, in the future, it plans to offer training courses for school teachers and administrators and is currently developing an accreditation system.

Recommendations for Preparing to Replicate Fundación Paraguaya’s Model

Allow sufficient time to build a movement and interest in Fundación Paraguaya’s model, and commit to long-term engagement.

Scaling up using Fundación Paraguaya’s strategy is a slow and long-term process. Fundación Paraguaya began reflecting on different possibilities for scale-up in 2004. Teach a Man to Fish was formally established in 2006 and, in 2007, Fundación Paraguaya explicitly incorporated into its mission an external focus on “proactively disseminating [its model] worldwide.” The “School in a Box” guides were first made available in 2008, and are periodically updated. The process has been underway for four years and involves continuous engagement.

Build in market-driven features for the local context.

In order for the schools replicating its model to be market-driven (and cover their costs), Fundación Paraguaya realizes that each school will need to adapt to the particular local economic opportunities. The San Francisco school is located in a rural area and thus tries to capitalize on opportunities in the rural and agricultural sector, including growing vegetables, raising livestock, and providing services needed in rural areas. However, other schools are being developed around employment and business opportunities in

different contexts, including coastal, urban, and forest areas. One “School in a Box” manual is devoted to explaining how schools can identify profitable activities, based on their own assets and local market opportunities, and how to add value to their products (e.g., producing cheese from milk from a school herd).

Keep the model flexible.

“School in a Box” emphasizes two core features of the school model: 1) the “learning by doing” educational approach by running on-campus enterprises, and 2) the pursuit of financial sustainability from the income generated by these enterprises. Beyond this, however, the model is very flexible and encourages (even requires) new schools to develop their academic programs around the skills and products in demand in their particular markets.

Offer in-person support to supplement the documentation.

Fundación Paraguaya encourages its partners and potential partners to visit its model school in Paraguay to observe the model in action and talk to students, teachers, and administrators about their experiences. Fundación Paraguaya also provides hands-on technical assistance to partner schools if requested.

Lessons Learnt

Fundación Paraguaya and other similar schools who employ similar scale-up strategies have learned many similar lessons:

- **Scaling up takes time.** This includes time for the program or model to prove itself as effective (and thus worthy of scaling up). Once it is clear that scaling up is viable, it takes time to select an appropriate strategy, identify partners, and share information (through manuals, training, or technical assistance) effectively. Fundación Paraguaya’s scale-up process, for example, took four years and is still ongoing.
- **There are different scale-up strategies for different cost and funding levels.** Some might rely on partners generating their own revenue (or attracting their own donor funding); others might involve direct funding. Still others, such as the planned *A Ganar* Alliance, begin by directly funding programs and gradually taper this off.
- **Maintaining quality is critical to effective scale-up.** The organizations profiled here use a variety of methods, ranging from less formal methods, such as peer mentoring and demonstration, to more set systems of accreditation or certification.
- **Market focus is crucial** and should be a prime concern of youth workforce development projects entering a scale-up phase. Working through local organizations (which know local markets better), conducting market assessments in every new location, and providing training or information on how to identify and respond to market opportunities are several means by which PLP partners achieved this. Youth workforce development programs looking to scale up must determine what strategy is right for them. Influencing factors include the program and organization’s own mission and goals, the available human and financial resources, the maturity level and length of the program, and existing expansion or partnership structures. Whether programs decide to expand directly, replicate, create an alliance, or support local partners, the critical question for workforce development program is ensuring a market-driven focus in all new markets.