



Open School Programme

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Section 1: Presentation

In 2000, within the framework of the International Year for a Culture of Peace, the UNESCO Brasilia Office launched the *Open Schools: education and culture for peace Programme*, an initiative that opens public schools initially on weekends where schools' activities are not carried out, in order to offer artistic, cultural, leisure and sports activities, as well as initial work training, to young people and their communities.

Background

The Open Schools Programme was initially created by a team from the Social and Human Sciences Sector of the UNESCO Brasilia Office as a response to data collected by a survey carried out by the Office which identified *young people* as being one of the most vulnerable social groups of the country.

In fact Brazil's youth population, that amounts to 35 million people (20% of the total Brazilian population), shows a high school drop-out rate and the cycle that begins with low schooling levels leads to under-employment or unemployment. Low schooling levels, however, are a reality that mainly affects young people in situations of social vulnerability. Young people with most disadvantaged backgrounds are the ones at most risk of social exclusion and also of being victims of intolerant and violent behaviours.

Both low schooling levels and social exclusion affect socially vulnerable young people of all over the world. Especially when young people face linguistic and culture barriers, that are not overcome neither inside or outside schools (through integration in the surrounding communities). By focusing on youngsters, the school and the surrounding community, the Open Schools Programme has managed to pacify the school environment and its surroundings and strengthen young people with virtuous social inclusion process.

GP evolution

The Open Schools Programme is a UNESCO project that has become a national public policy at the municipal, state and federal levels. It was initially implemented by UNESCO in cooperation with State and Municipal Education authorities.

One of the main features of the Programme is the simplicity with which it can be replicated even in other countries. The design of the Open Schools Programme favours a need based to be adapted to the social context/educative needs in specific contexts.

The flexibility of the Open Schools Programme makes it possible to operate it in every educational setting, being tailored with specific activities (as ‘needed’ inside the educative system) or on an ever-increasing scale.

Currently, the Open Schools Programme opens more than 4,000 schools every weekend in all regions of the country, to the benefit of around 4 million people.

What the GP consists of?

Opening the school gates in the afternoons, on Saturdays and Sundays **alters the image of the traditional school** which start to meet learning needs and also opening to local needs.

Workshops on art, culture and sport favour the emergence of new expressions and strengthen cultural and personal identities. When the young person is recognized, his or her self-esteem is raised.

The Open Schools Programme is based on a culture of peace and nonviolence to promote the citizenship of adolescents, youngsters and the school community as a whole.

It is an initiative that tries to reach multiple goals aimed by the Education sector calling for an action for social inclusion that stimulates improvements in schools, cultural participation, and care for the environment. In addition to promoting human development, citizenship and the social inclusion of youngsters and their communities, the Open Schools Programme fosters an improvement in the quality of the country’s education by increasing opportunities for access to educational, cultural, sports, leisure and income-generating activities. Activities are open to the entire community and have the additional purpose of improving the quality of relations and fostering interaction among teachers, students and family members.

Through the ‘Open school programme’ students have the chance to be involved in afternoon or week end extra-curricular activities aimed at reaching learning needs that could be not satisfied by standard educative offer. The activities developed during the ‘Open school programme’ could be very diverse and may be set thanks to a previous student’s investigation survey or to a deep knowledge on the school composition that detected all the learning gaps present at school which needs further support and development in order to reach a full inclusive educative offer.

The programme gives also the opportunities to enlarge the school partnerships with local organizations working in the field of social inclusion, collaborating in the set-up and development of the activities (in the field of arts and culture, sports, leisure, laboratories, etc.).

But... which activities can be chosen?

Here we propose a concrete example of an afternoon activity developed by a primary school in Villabate, developed inside the Open School Programme framework.

Ex.: the *Theatre Laboratory in School!*

In recent years (2016), in a primary school of Villabate many foreign children attending the schools were experiencing protracted social exclusion and bullying episodes. The % of foreign students in the school was a quite new phenomenon having also an increasing trend.

The head teacher in collaboration with a successful partnership involving local ngos in the education field and experts working in the social co-decided to include in the Open Schools Programme (already being implemented) a specific extracurricular activity called ***Theatre Laboratory in School!***

Contrary to what the name recalls, ***Theatre Laboratory in School*** is not based on a drama school where the students can explore their acting potentialities and interests.

It consists always on acting and simulation but with an introspective purpose: ***Theatre Laboratory in School*** is focused on role playing training, or role-playing, including a simulation technique that requires participants (in this specific case students) to play, for a limited time, the role of "actors", that is to represent some roles in interaction with each other, while other participants act as "Observers" of the contents and the processes that the representation manifests.

But the real novelty inside this activity is that the characters to be interpreted do not come from famous plot or books. Students are requested to interpret the 'other students' main characters and personalities and they will discover to be in the 'shoes' of the bullying students or of the victimised students only through the acting process. This allows a subsequent analysis of the experiences, of the interpersonal dynamics, of the ways of exercising specific roles, and more generally of the communication processes acted in the context represented. Role-playing is a valuable tool of training, based on the simulation of something that has or could be related to a real situation (social exclusion cases or bullying episodes) and is structured in such a way as to be emotionally engaging but most of all a social *learning* experience. The characteristics of this technique provide multiple stimuli for learning through imitation, action, observation of the behaviour of others and the comments received on their own, through the analysis of the whole process.

In the Villabate's school the students, after a deep introspective analytical technique and the role playing, autonomously recognized the *unaware* roles that they were playing, widening their perspective and social understanding.

Section 2: Resources

To implement this good practice, you will need:

- A big room/space (even outdoor but a silent one)
- A ‘plot’ that is based on a previous analysis of students relations in classrooms;
- Supporting materials: chairs, pictures, drawings, clothes (materials that could help to reproduce the roles among students); a camera;
- Human resources that could include a psychologist, a cultural mediator, an educator, an art teacher, support staff as older students, parents or youth workers as volunteers, etc.

*Note: this list is not meant to be exhaustive and in cases human resources are missing also a teacher or educator alone and without a specific background but willing to learn how to conduct Role-play simulations can be tutor of this activity;

Section 3: Duration

This good practice could be implemented continuously during a six-month period with an optional frequency of one, two or three times a week, according to the space foreseen for the laboratory activities (inside the Open Schools Programme). It could be developed in the afternoon as laboratory activities part of the extracurricular activities foreseen within the Open School Programme.

Section 4: Expected results

By implementing this good practice, you will:

- Enhance individual understanding on the importance of tolerance and non-discrimination in school environments and at a personal level
- Create a contact network for the inclusion of migrants
- Bringing the community and its youngsters together in the school spaces
- Constructing spaces for understanding, dialogue and living together
- Opening public schools in the afternoons
- Mapping the talents organization that exist in the surrounding community for successful school partnership
- Inviting those with talents to coordinate activities in the school
- Encouraging the transfer of knowledge existing in the community
- Broadening the horizons of the community and its young people
- Offering sports, cultural, arts and leisure activities and initial work training for youngsters inside the Open school programme
- Strengthening the school so that it can become an agglutinating centre and a centre for the diffusion of multiculturalism and coexistence
- Building a culture of tolerance and respect for diversity

Section 5: Evaluation

How can we adapt this good practice to our context?

Here, trainees should reflect on the above question, having into consideration their real needs and technical and human resources available. This section aims to develop critical thinking and to adjust the good practice to each particular educative context. Whether this is proposed on the face-to-face sessions or virtually at home (after watching the MOOC videos, where all the previous information should be available), trainees should write a small reflection, considering what is doable and positive and what is not. Trainers can provide a set of orientations to help them do this (What competences should the professionals have? Do we have the space needed? How can we include this good practice in the school plan of activities? Etc...)