

For this final assignment of the spring semester having to do with the figurative scenario of being given a one-time grant of \$100 million, I have decided to take that money and put it towards education in South America. My primary reason for choosing this region was because of the high population and the challenges they face due to poverty and the several different languages spoken across the region. Despite the economic growth in the region, more Latin Americans are living in poverty now than 20 years ago. The poor are generally still illiterate or barely literate. Even worse is that there children have limited opportunities to learn. They don't have the luxury of moving away from poverty by acquiring skills and knowledge even though just about nine out of every ten children in the region enrolls in the first grade (Education). When I was examining the current educational scenario in South America it was disheartening to me that people were essentially being stripped of their right for opportunity because of diversity and lack of schooling. As we learn here in the states, education is the key to further opportunity for your mind and your future. My goal for this essay is to use that \$100 million as a tool to bring further opportunity to that region.

For this money, my initial idea was to build three different schools throughout the continent and have community centers to compliment them. After further consideration I have decided to limit my proposal to two schools to save almost \$30 million. Where these schools and community centers are going to be located will depend strictly on what the South American government allows. With the flaws in the security of the country it has to be certain these buildings and its attendants can remain safe. According to my research, the average cost of building one of these schools is about \$26.5 million which can be broken down to \$242.96 per square foot. With this cost, we can envision a school about the size of your average YMCA building (School Costs). The information I found indicated that the school cost would include supplies throughout the facility as well. The next step after completing building locations for the schools would be doing the same for the community centers. Ideally, they would be located right next to one another to ensure convenience. An average community center with both indoor and outdoor access for activities will cost about \$3.2 million (prn). Once these places are under construction the next step would be to find employees. Because of the updated proposal going from three schools to two we saved a large amount of money. Total costs thus far would be around \$59.4 million. As a result, we can afford to pay a decent number of employees a good hourly wage for an extended period which will depend on how well these educational/recreational facilities thrive in the region. Other investments would include, maintenance, potential for technology education, possible competitive sports, etc.

It has been proven often that education and income are closely related. In Brazil, the poorest 40 percent of teenagers, ages 15-19, average four years of schooling and their counterparts in the top 20 percent of income distribution have twice that average level of schooling. Indigenous Latin Americans suffer even more from lack of schooling. In Bolivia's urban areas the average non-indigenous person goes to school for ten years. Spanish-speaking indigenous people average six years of schooling and those who do not speak Spanish have an average of .4 years of schooling (Education). These are just two examples of the hardship citizens in South America endure because of where they come from. My thoughts were that once the school building reaches approval we would begin to hire on (and accept volunteers) that are both bilingual and monolingual. The goal would be to employ people who speak as

many languages as possible to avoid discomfort among those who choose to attend schooling at these facilities with different backgrounds. Although it is necessary to do your most sufficient learning outside of the comfort zone, I think in an environment like this we need to ensure mental and emotional stability first.

Attempting to bring positive change to a culture rich part of the world tends to be perceived as controversial to many. No matter the intentions there will be disagreements somewhere along the line. I feel because economics and politics have such a close relationship it is likely the production of the schools and community centers may inflict a problem potentially due to jobs being taken or vacated and money influencing education more than production or labor. In the event of a tiff I think the best solution may be dispersing some of the money saved (\$40.6 million) into the local economies being affected negatively by the education buildings. I think by doing that it will buy enough time for people to eventually see the positive impact education can have and in turn, would give the local people time to experience directly the specific changes we would be trying to make. Security precautions will have to be made as well to ensure the safety of students and employees. In a perfect world, there would be properly trained individuals who would secure entrances and exits of the buildings, however anyone with experience would be a viable option. Cultural challenges cannot be settled so easily however. What could prevent cultural feuds before they even enter the perimeters of schools or recreational centers is a simple message in our reading by Luis Lopez. If you are to enter these buildings you are to know that, “sectors of society must engage in the re-evaluation of cultural and linguistic diversity as a value in itself and as a valid resource for the construction of new social relationships and of a new and more democratic society.” (Lopez,49) If citizens of the region do not share this passion for change they will be encouraged to pursue education elsewhere.

I think this is a great way to spend money in this region because it gives everyone in South America an opportunity to gather and become more familiar with one another both linguistically and culturally. With such a large diverse population on one continent, these schools and community centers would have the ability to provide clarity and insight for these civilians as to what the modern world should offer on a consistent basis. I believe that by bringing a more institutionalized education to a region struggling with poverty, the sky is the limit for people discovering their potential intelligence to achieve a better sense of self-fulfillment resulting in their new-found characteristics influencing change throughout the world. “Intercultural education and learning an indigenous language- even if it is at a very basic and rudimentary level- might contribute to the mental decolonization of society indigenous intellectuals now demand.” (Lopez, 49)

References

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