

02

STUDY, TAKE OFF AND FLY

Evaluation of Oportunidades, a program by the Gloria de Kriete Foundation

conociendo series



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FUNDACIÓN PARA LA
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PRESENTATION

The Conociendo series was born in 2018 to demonstrate to the Salvadoran society that, in the country, from the private sphere, social initiatives are being carried out aimed at enhancing human development for Salvadorans. These experiences, documented in this series, can inspire both large-scale public policies and encourage interesting discussions about how best to do things.

This publication documents the **Oportunidades program** by the Gloria de Kriete Foundation, an educational initiative that consists of a complementary schooling program for academically talented youth with limited resources. It begins in high school at 9th grade, supporting them up until labor insertion; in total it may be up to 8 years from their admission to the program. This is clearly a long-term endeavor that expresses commitment to youth and education.

Investing in people is particularly valuable in a country where giving out real opportunities for human growth to its population means the transformation of its productive model (Escuela Superior de Economía y Negocios, 2019). This transformation requires training to its human resources, which the public educational system is not ready to promote. Given this reality, **Oportunidades** decides to become an alternative for a complementary education that singles out adolescents that want to defy the circumstances imposed by the social setting and put their talents to better themselves and their country. For those who graduate from the first phase of the program, there is a possibility to earn scholarships to pursue career degrees and moreover, receive support to attain their first job. **Oportunidades** is a program that seeks to open windows of opportunities where doors seem to be closed.

This document analyzes the **Oportunidades program** from an academic perspective and it documents a proposition that values and promotes the resilience of the individual through a holistic and avant-garde education.

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INTRODUCTION

The Informe Sobre Desarrollo Humano El Salvador 2018, (Report on Human Development, El Salvador 2018) dedicated to Salvadoran youth¹, justified the emphasis placed on this population group for three fundamental reasons. First, our country currently has the largest generation ever of young people under 29 years of age (56.6%); second, the national and international recognition of this population group as subject to rights; and finally, the transformative potential that this generation has in human development of their own countries (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, 2018)

In El Salvador, this age group is called upon to be architects of the country's economic transformation needed, by involving themselves in more complex productive sectors and expanding the exports' range (Escuela Superior de Economía y Negocios, 2019). However, this population has an average of only 10 years of education (3 more years than the national average) lacking the necessary training, as the educational system does not provide the necessary tools. This is confirmed through the results of the aptitude test taken by those who completed high school and whose grade average does not exceed 6 (maximum is 10), these have been the results every year, since the measurements began.

^{1/} According to the General Youth Act, young people are defined as persons between the ages of 15 and 29.

In addition to the low average quality of the educational system, the socio-economic, political, violence and insecurity contexts in the country profoundly limit the potential and options available to this group. Furthermore, there is also a generalized negative perception and stigmatization of this young population that is associated with violence and insecurity (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, 2018). This raises the following paradox: how do we foster the transformative potential of our country's young people if we distrust them?

If we want to make changes that impact families, communities and the country, it is fundamental that we empower our youth (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, 2010). There is enormous potential to engage other players within the private sector, with the capacity to generate unconventional and high-impact initiatives, generating development opportunities for our youth.

In El Salvador, there already are efforts that are worth highlighting, because they bet on building environments of empowerment for youth, in an organized and systematic way. These initiatives have enabled real possibilities for human development to those who, being part of challenging school and family contexts, could not aspire to much more than school desertion; this possibly leading to a precarious job, unemployment or joining groups linked to gang violence.

Most adolescents are not involved in violent behavior. They would rather continue with their studies, be part of social, artistic and cultural activities, look for opportunities to improve their lives (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, 2018). They are endowed with qualities to face adversity, overcome it and continue to move forward. They are a resilient youth that possess motivation and conviction to overcome multiple obstacles in their different environments at home and in their communities.

The **Oportunidades program** is an example of what the private sector can contribute when vision and solidarity come together. It is visionary because it bets on the human talent of young people, by proposing a complementary school program, providing university scholarships and supplying job placement support for those who manage to finish that phase. It's a work of solidarity be-

cause it focuses on supporting adolescents whose circumstances of origin and life deprive them of real opportunities for development.

We have applied the theory of resilience to analyze the program, because we identified that in this initiative, not only four building factors of resilience (school, classrooms, classmates and families) converge, but also three mechanisms are applied. These are significant relationships, high expectations and opportunities for community participation and contributions. Resilience encourages all of these explicitly. In other words, the program could be defined as an initiative that goes beyond supplementing the curriculum and providing employability support to its participants. It also promotes an environment for academic and personal resilience.

In our country, young people are tirelessly seeking spaces or environments with resources to learn, to cope with difficulties, to get educated and seek employment, thus breaking the cycle of poverty. This is exactly what **Oportunidades** does. It strengthens, with a pragmatic vision, those who are part of this initiative, who are capable of overcoming all variables against them. It's a strategic commitment aimed to increase, both in quantity and quality, the protective factors that build resilience.

In this research, it can be confirmed that **Oportunidades** fits the description of an environment that develops and promotes student resilience and provides them with the three key mechanisms previously mentioned (relationships, expectations and opportunities to contribute to the community). In fact, it is an initiative that has made it possible to institutionalize the potentialities of all four building factors in one place.

01

RESILIENCE AND THE OPORTUNIDADES PROGRAM

WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Resilience is the ability to recover and to deal effectively with difficulties. First, it is not a genetic trait or a personal quality, but, above all, the result of the interaction between the [person] and his or her environment. (Garmezy, 1991; Masten, 2013; Ungar and Teram, 2005). Second, the risk or protection factors that arise from the interaction between the [person] with his or her surroundings could have different effects according to the circumstances; therefore, we cannot assume, for example, that high cognitive skills will always lead to higher resilience (Rutter, 2013). Third, the cumulative risks are even worse than the individual risks considered; for example, young people in poverty settings who do not attend schools with adequate resources (material and human) for their learning, that live in violent communities are at greater risk than those coming from families with severe economic constraints (Garmezy, 1991; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Fourth, although the protective factors are on three levels (the individual, family and community) and different variables come into play (family cohesion, individual intelligence, normal cognitive development, effective schools, mentors, guides or positive behavioral models, to name a few), it is high quality social relationships that stand out for their importance.

(Rutter, 2006; Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker, 2000; Ungar, 2004). Finally, regarding the recommendations for developing and strengthening resilience, strategies are suggested that work at all three levels and not just one. (Ungar, 2004; Masten, 2014).

It is important to add that one of the convergences among researchers includes an ecological understanding of resilience. That is, resilience should be considered as a function of the ability of the environment to facilitate the development of the individual. (Ungar, 2013). This perspective focuses on the provision of significant resources in the environment, enabling a greater probability of resource use and the development of resilient individuals.

Educational resilience

Resilience is associated with an improved quality of life (Abiola and Udolfia, 2011), the personal well-being and the ability to be functional in times of difficulty. This connection should tell us the importance of investing in the creation of environments to build and strengthen resilience. School is one of the privileged spaces to do so since it allows the involvement of the three levels of intervention pointed out in the previous section (the individual, family and community).

In this regard, resilience has been examined in school and learning contexts (Cassidy, 2015) based on the concept of educational resilience, with the goal of identifying the factors that contribute to strengthening it and promoting educational interventions that have long-term benefits for the student body (Zautra, 2009).

Educational resilience has been defined as the incremental probability of academic success despite the adversities of the environment (Wang et al., 1994). Resilient students are described as those who maintain a high level of motivation in their performance, even when they face stressful situations and conditions that put them at risk of poor performance (Alva, 1991).

**INSET
01****KEY CONCEPTS AROUND EDUCATIONAL RESILIENCE**

Educational resilience is a factor that can improve the academic performance of students who are subject to higher risk factors (Waxman, Gray and Padron, 2003) and can be strengthened and promoted by focusing on elements such as social competence, the ability to solve problems, autonomy, sense of purpose (Benard, 1993), motivation, goal orientation, positive use of time, family life and learning environments. (Wagnild, 2009; Waxman et al., 2003; McMillan and Reed, 1994).

This involves several personal factors such as grit, mindset and self-efficacy. Grit is understood as the individual tendency to maintain interest, passion and effort towards long-term goals, despite challenges and failures (Duckworth et al., 2007). It's a better predictor of academic success than IQ or talent (Duckworth and Quinn, 2009; Dweck 2006 and 2010).

Mindset is usually divided in two types: growth and fixed. A fixed mindset applies to the individuals that have fixed beliefs about their intellectual level and abilities. On the other hand, a growth mindset describes a person that considers his or her intelligence and abilities as a base or starting point for their development, and consider that challenges, including failures, are opportunities to develop their ability to succeed through practice and hard work. (Dweck, 2006 and 2010).

Studies about educational resilience also reveal that resilient students possess a high sense of self-efficacy, persistence and planning, low levels of anxiety and control of uncertainty (Martin and Marsh, 2006). In the same way, Hamill (2003) reported that self-efficacy is an important characteristic that distinguishes whether students are resilient or not, in groups between the ages of 16 to 19 years old. The concept of self-efficacy emerges as the central element in the socio-cognitive theory, and it is defined as people's belief and self confidence in their own abilities to organize and execute courses of action required

for handling future activities. (Bandura, 1995). Self-efficacy is considered as a protective factor that regulates functioning and emotional well-being, through cognitive, motivational, affective and selective processes (Hamill, 2003).

The relevance of self-efficacy, grit, and mindset for educational resilience indicate the need to establish profound social relationships among the members of the educational community (teachers, students and parents) that promote the development of the students' assurance and self-confidence. The settings that provide resources and foster the building of these significant social bonds are key to academic success and are the basis for other personal development projects of our youth.

Source: Author's creation

THE OPORTUNIDADES PROGRAM

The **Oportunidades program** begins in 2007 as part of the activities performed by the Gloria de Kriete Foundation. The program has the operational support of the Ágape Association of El Salvador, and its mission is to become the leading program of academic excellence and holistic education for limited-resourced youth that have high academic performance. **Oportunidades** has five campuses located in San Salvador, Santa Ana, Chalatenango, San Miguel and Ahuachapán, where it serves 77 municipalities in 13 departments in El Salvador, reaching 24.8% of the national territory.

Oportunidades stands out from other initiatives due to the scope and depth of the intervention undertaken. On one hand, it does not end in an activity aimed at a particular moment in the student's educational process. It actually has a lasting impact during the school journey that begins at ninth grade and

it continues for 5 to 8 years; it ends with the young person attaining their first job. Similarly, the depth of its intervention involves not only the consolidation of cognitive skills, the appropriation of contents, but also the development of traits like autonomy, sense of purpose, self-motivation and the sociability of its participants. All the above is possible thanks to scholarships grants and educational funding for those who are part of the program.

Oportunidades has the following three phases: Complementary Education, Higher Education and Employability Support.

Phase 1: Complementary Education (STUDY)

STUDY² is the phase of academic reinforcement consisting of eight subject areas: Spanish Language Arts, Mathematics, English as a Second Language, Computer Programming, Science, Vocational Guidance, Entrepreneurship and Values. As can be noted, in this phase **Oportunidades** includes not only the development of cognitive skills and specific technical knowledge of some fields, but also places a strong emphasis on the teaching of socio-emotional competences as well as life skills. All of these will favor the continuation of higher education and access to the job market. It is a program that assumes the indissoluble relationship that must exist between productive and citizenship competences in order to build a better society.

Another important characteristic of this first phase is the explicit acknowledgment of the socio-cultural deficits or gaps of its students and the commitment to offer a series of activities to compensate those gaps. Once admitted to the program, the students receive basic resources (scholarships, uniforms, school supplies, food, visual aids and allowances for transportation) so they can fully focus on their studies. Additionally, a wide variety of life experiences (lectures, special guest speakers, workshops, on campus visits to many universities, cultural field trips, among others) are available for them to broaden their world and open their minds.

2/ STUDY refers to the level NIVELA in the Spanish version.

At the beginning of this phase is when the program, with the introduction of routines, breaks the negative habits (tardiness, lack of commitment, etc.) that the students have acquired. In the same way, there is a rigorous work of academic levelling carried out by the team of teachers through an intensive program. For example, in some cases, the program works to improve the Mathematics level of those who join the program after completing 9th grade but show academic skills of a 4th or 5th grader. Similarly, in the area of Computer Programming, English as a Second Language, Science and Spanish Language Arts, there are considerable gaps to fill since they are admitted into the program.

The main goal for faculty members is that after three years of completing the first phase, students will be better prepared to continue their studies at any higher education institution where they are admitted. In other words, the starting point of the educational process in **Oportunidades** establishes very high expectations for faculty members and students. Regardless of the starting conditions, pedagogical and professional resources will be available for the fulfillment of their goals.

In practice, this phase offers a full-time model where the students continue taking their morning classes in public high schools and attend **Oportunidades** courses in the afternoon to reinforce their academic and socio-emotional skills during the remaining two to three years of high school. Between 2013 and 2016, a Saturday course modality was implemented, co-financed with FOMILENIO I and the Gloria de Kriete Foundation funds, to boost academic levels in rural areas near the northern part of El Salvador.

The program introduced to the curriculum the concept of “Ciudadano **Oportunidades**” (Oportunidades Citizen) which today serves to define membership to the program through the following two symbols: 1) a definition of seven values summarized by the acronym CRIARSE (to be “RAISED” in English) with values - Commitment, Respect, Integrity, Gratitude, Resilience, Solidarity and Equitability; and 2) the **Oportunidades** Pledge, an explicit commitment that summarizes what it means to be a Ciudadano Oportunidades.

From 2009 up to 2018, 1,351 students have graduated from phase 1 (both methodologies included). The results of the test “Prueba de Aprendizaje y Aptitudes para Egresados de Educación Media³³” (PAES) of the **Oportunidades** students in phase 1 are notably higher (at least 2 points or more) than the average attained at the national level for the same period.

Phase 2: Higher Education (TAKE OFF)

Although higher education begins after the successful completion of the first phase, TAKE OFF phase begins during high school by carrying out personalized vocational assessments and counseling activities that enable an appropriate link between aptitudes, attitudes and the socio-economic reality of each student, including his or her aspirations for professional development. **Oportunidades** keeps a philosophy of helping to build the best options for each student, regardless if they are part of the program or if it deals with alternatives that the students have identified on their own.

Once admitted to the academic programs in higher learning institutions, which may vary in duration and fields of knowledge, **Oportunidades** provides educational funding through scholarships and loans for young people to begin their studies in public and private institutions in the country and abroad. To date, **Oportunidades** funds studies for technical and teaching careers, bachelor’s degrees and engineering degrees. **Oportunidades** has signed more than 20 cooperation agreements with national universities and three foreign institutions.

During their university studies, the program promotes, among its students, the creation of support networks that are within the same institutions of higher education. These networks become spaces to guide them through crisis management, expectations, and counseling for career path adjustments that teenagers usually undergo as part of the transition process from high school

3/ Aptitude and Skills Test for high school graduates.

to university. Likewise, the **Oportunidades** staff keeps constant communication with their students as a follow-up strategy.

Between 2009 and 2018, a total of 1,097 students were granted scholarships by the Gloria de Kriete Foundation.

Phase 3: Employability Support (FLY)

FLY is the last stage of the program, offering personal counseling to each college student or recent graduate to increase their possibilities of accessing the formal labor market. The **Oportunidades** faculty members carry out, through labor intermediation, a series of activities that include multiple topics (such as courses, workshops about the reality and tendencies of employment, lectures with businessmen and successful entrepreneurs, mentoring, unpaid or paid internships, etc.) with the purpose of enhancing the recruitment profile of each youth. To date, more than eighty seminars and workshops have been held to strengthen the employability skills of adolescents in the program.

451 students have completed their workshops and are certified through the labor intermediation phase. Out of the total 1,097 Gloria de Kriete Foundation scholarship recipients, more than half, 524, are placed in internships or fixed job positions. In addition, the percentage of job placement for higher education graduates amounts to 78%.

One of the advantages of the program resides in its close collaborative relation with the private business sector and other strategic partners of different types (international entities, non-government organizations, multinational companies) that share the goals of improving the quality of life of Salvadorans through education. Their philosophy is, more can be done for the country by working together, enabling the access to relevant and updated information of the detailed needs of the corporate sector, as well as keeping up with the changing environment.

Oportunidades' mission, regarding this phase, reflects the conviction that supporting youth from challenging environments and bringing them academ-

ic, socio-emotional and financial support so they get the training in the best possible manner, contributes enormously to the development of holistic professionals with a sharp ethical commitment ready to be of service to the country's transformation.

OPORTUNIDADES PROGRAM, A SPACE TO BUILD RESILIENCE

This chapter provides a qualitative analysis of the Program from the educational community players' perceptions. Favorable evidence will be presented on the hypothesis that it's possible to carry out, with good results, comprehensive interactions that include variables like family and the creation of adequate school spaces, that traditionally have been neglected because they were considered too complex to handle.

As we will see, from the educational research perspective, in **Oportunidades** not only the four building factors of resilience (school, classrooms, classmates and families) come together, but also three mechanisms are applied. These are significant relationships, high expectations and opportunities for community participation and contributions. Resilience encourages all of these explicitly. In other words, the program could be defined as an initiative that goes beyond completing the curriculum and providing employability support to its participants. It also enables an ideal space for nurturing academic and personal resilience.

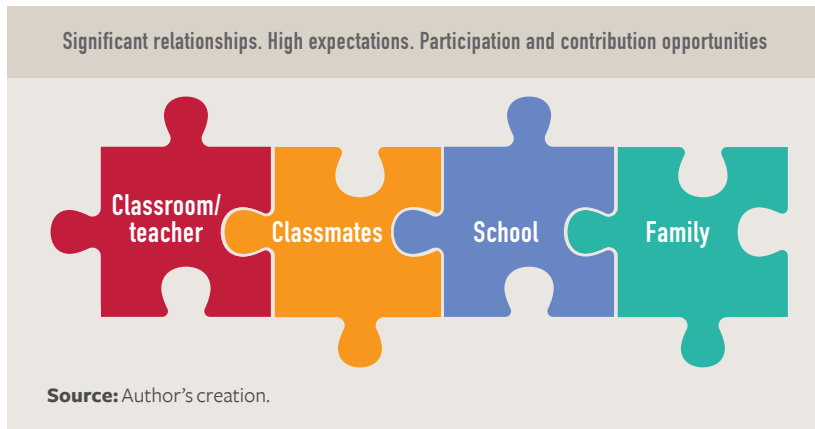
WHERE DOES OPORTUNIDADES BUILD RESILIENCE?

The educational environment or contexts in which youth are brought up or interact are key to their resilience development and strengthening.

MacDonald and Valdivieso (2000) postulate that the environments can foster resilience when providing opportunities for emotional and motivational development, as well as other strategic support.

As already mentioned, there are four relevant environments to build students' resilience: 1) the classroom, involving teachers' attitude and support; 2) group of classmates; 3) the school as a whole; 4) the family, including the expectations and support they provide to students (Morrison and Allen, 2007). In addition, there are three main mechanisms through which the different settings could promote resilience: significant relationships, high expectations and opportunities for community engagement and contribution. Building student's resilience is about strengthening these mechanisms within as many environments as possible.

DIAGRAM 1/ Spaces to build resilience



WHAT CAN BE DONE IN EVERY KEY ENVIRONMENT?

In the classroom, the teachers have many opportunities to capitalize on the protective factors that foster resilience in their students through their day-to-day

pedagogical practices. It may start by helping them build self-confidence, encouraging them so they can consciously and seriously dedicate themselves to their studies, and develop autonomy and independence (Alfassi, 2004).

Some of the relevant strategies, collected from scientific literature, which have been identified from a perception analysis in **Oportunidades**, are the following:

- Students and educators work together to establish learning goals and evaluate their progress.
- Provide options to students, relative to their learning experiences, promote the sense of responsibility and strengthen self-esteem. (Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon and Barch, 2004).
- Making use of strategies centered on the one who learns, changes the perception of the educator from being a source of information to one of being a facilitator (Waxman, Padron and Arnold, 2001).
- Ensuring the relevance of the curriculum is crucial for the construction of purpose linked to learning and life.
- Designing class activities is useful to develop relationship skills, like learning to cooperate, resisting negative peer pressure and negotiating solutions when conflicts arise (Weissberg and O´Brien, 2004).

Oportunidades' educational practices allow classes to be taught in a positive environment. The student body can develop respect for individual differences, as well as social skills and teamwork, when working in cooperative groups with goals and egalitarian participation (Blum, McNeely, Nonnemaker, 2002). In the same way, cooperative groups have the potential of creating positive environments that noticeably reduce the rejection of classmates, and at the same time, they keep a favorable commitment to others (Waxman et al., 2001).

The relationships with companies, community leaders and groups of students provide potential behavior models that enforce the sense of purpose, personal and professional expectations for the teenagers (Henderson and Milstein, 2003). Of equal importance for a sense of purpose is the involvement of adolescents in activities that benefit the community in the broad sense, such as

volunteering in the same school or outside of it, enable the building of social bonds and an expanded sense of life purpose. (Rak and Patterson, 1996).

The institution encourages activities with a sense of educational community that reinforces the bonds between all its members. These activities, extracurricular or not, may include subjects as Arts, Sciences, specific interests' groups and Music (Ryan and Patrick, 2001). Particularly important in this environment are activities linked to the student government which may well strengthen the possibilities of protecting citizenship skills that value the country's democratic institution.

Finally, the family environment might offer other possibilities of protection when significant relationships are built between schools and families (Tolan, Gorman-Smith and Henry, 2004). While the parents are key in the development of resiliency in their children, teachers and educators must reinforce the importance of education, family communication and the collective sense of the relevance of the educational process. Let's not forget that parents are the best sources of information about the strengths and abilities for their offspring, but also of their material and affective deprivation. For these reasons, developing significant relationships with them is fundamental for the fostering of the student's resilience (Henderson and Milstein, 2003).

WHAT DOES OPORTUNIDADES DO?

Working together to define learning and progress objectives

One of the characteristics that differentiates **Oportunidades** in achieving their goals is the conviction of change as a constant for improvement. This premise unchains a series of actions and activities by the different players within the program (administrators, teachers, psychologists, and students, among others) which promotes coordinated work dynamics to review what hasn't worked, what is being done right and what could be done better to benefit their students' learning. This not only happens with first phase students but is also included in

feedback sessions with students in phase two (in higher education institutions) who provide first-hand experiences about the changes in learning objectives to improve the opportunities of the cohorts in the first phase. This has meant, since the program began, an increase in the number of academic reinforcement subjects in the first phase, which now include eight subjects; it originally started with only three (English as a Second Language, Computer Programming and Values).

It's common to hear the young **Oportunidades** students recount how the content and pedagogical activities have changed in some subjects like Computer Programming, Mathematics, English as a Second Language, Vocational Guidance, and others. This stands in contrast to the institutional rigidity that public schools traditionally have regarding innovations or cooperative work with their students.

Environments that promote responsibility and self-esteem

One of the first challenges that adolescents face is altering their life's habits in a short period of time to meet the demands of the program, where responsibility for their actions and results are the foundation of a personal transformational process. Starting with the admission interview, the attitude of those applying for the program is a major factor to decide if the young person is capable of coping with a personal change process that involves unlearning bad habits. These may include tardiness, shyness to relate with others in a positive manner, lack of initiative to seek and produce solutions for problems, among others. We must consider that many of the environments of origin enable different possibilities to do things wrong, take on or copy negative roles, or that young people are so insecure that isolation is the only option to survive, so that we can better understand the importance of this initial step.

The first weeks of the program are filled with small but great battles, such as learning to wait in line to get lunch, greeting all the people they come across, looking people in the eye while speaking to them, posing their doubts to the teacher during class, addressing their classmates in a positive and polite way, and taking responsibility for their academic and personal decisions.

The **Oportunidades**’ students are aware that the program is an “opportunity of a lifetime” for multiple reasons. They express how it is possible to feel, from the first day of classes, a different culture, a space, a “family” to whom they matter a lot, for whom they are a priority, and where they can begin a journey that makes it possible to dream and set goals. Before they were part of the program, this wasn’t even imaginable.

““ The program creates a strong bond with people and forms, not only academically, but in all matters of values, and good citizenship. I believe that from the moment one begins there, there is a different life perspective, one raises expectations, enters a new world, which the educational system does not manage to supply ... one expects more from life, sets better goals, creates a more elaborate life plan, and to a point, dares to dream dreams that before joining the program, one didn’t even [think possible].”

Oportunidades Student

““ “The [program] is a vehicle for self-improvement. I remember that before I enrolled in the [program] my only goal was to finish high school, and if anything go to a university, then I would study Accounting, [...] It really teaches us to learn to dream... Thanks to the [program] we have been able to expand our vision a bit more to get better things for us and our families.”

Oportunidades Student

Student centered pedagogy

A key element of **Oportunidades** is its teachers. The majority have different academic careers than those who work in the traditional educational system (both public and private). They are professionals in other fields, like engineering, that engage in teaching with a work culture that assumes that the student is the focal point in the learning process; that the student goes beyond the completion of his or her studies. Many become mentors to the adolescents, develop significant personal relationships that strengthen the motivation in

their students, because they are treated as people who have dreams that can become a reality.

When the **Oportunidades** youth are asked what are the differences between the program's classes and those of the institution where they attend high school, during the STUDY phase, they emphatically point out that within the program their education is personalized; to their teachers every one of them is important; the content of the courses and the methodologies vary and are innovating constantly; classes are interactive and they can ask questions without worrying about the teacher's reaction; the quality and the training of the teachers is far superior than those in public educational institutions; and the teachers in the program inspire and shape positive behaviors that they wish to develop within students.

In a few words from a student:

“ Also the kind of people that are in there... they are not the typical teachers that only assign... the task of ‘copy from the book’ and similar things, but rather they are teachers that have a real vocation to be there and help us grow, they aren’t just concerned about academics but also at the personal level... one forms a bond with every teacher that is there.”

Oportunidades Student

In addition, the learning environments at the program's training centers make, in their words, a big difference with school grounds or classrooms which are not overcrowded, and the availability of school supplies (books, manuals, software programs, etc.)

Curriculum relevance that includes the youth's future life

Traditionally, the educational system has been questioned about its curriculum's relevance. Does it promote knowledge, abilities and attitudes that allow young people to successfully join the labor market? **Oportunidades** carries out annual revisions of its programs, pedagogical activities, institutional resources,

extracurricular activities, among others, with the purpose of ensuring a real connection between what is learned in classrooms and what the job market requires.

However, the relevance goes beyond the program. It is extended by offering young people the skills that will help them in life, because it is about shaping good citizens, **Oportunidades** citizens, which includes a vision of life.

The personalized teaching and the creation of meaningful relationships between the students and the staff (administration, teachers, and psychologists) becomes the foundation to building, or rebuilding in some cases, self-confidence in each adolescent. These relationships of trust, based on the responsibility of each young person to take charge of his or her life project, are the starting point for the personal transformation journey that **Oportunidades** means for them.

“*The [program] cares about you, what you are going to do with your life after [graduation]...the [program] cares about one’s holistic life, that one becomes successful and has a [real] chance in life. I think that’s part of its success.*”

Oportunidades Student

The adolescents highlight the critical importance of their life planning process, in a precise and detailed way which includes personal coaching, allowing them not only to set life goals but also defining a plan to achieve them. Those in charge of this component in the program constantly monitor each student to ensure that what is defined as a project becomes a reality. Although the schools have a subject named “Life Orientation” that deals with this topic, it only has a superficial approach, which doesn’t delve effectively in the student’s life.

Class activities that develop relationship skills

The program not only includes reinforcement classes for young people to successfully finish their studies, but it also includes a wide range of extracurricular activities that promote, among other things, the creation of meaningful bonds

and classmates' integration among students of the different phases of the program (STUDY, TAKE-OFF, FLY), gradually building an awareness that they are like a second or third family.

Also important is the care provided by psychologists which is a key component to succeed in life. Young people describe how the spaces of communication that are opened with the psychologists allow them to face the personal problems and difficulties that may not have been addressed with anyone else, not even with their own families. Being aware that the program's staff members are there to listen and help, transform family and personal problems into challenges that can be solved, [...] making it possible to continue with their studies or life's projects.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CLASSMATES

The process of selecting the students for admission to the program prioritizes, in addition to their academic performance, their positive and entrepreneurial attitude and the commitment of at least one family member to the process that each young person will begin, lasting between 5 to 8 years.

Adolescents from **Oportunidades** not only share dreams to move forward in life, but also face the responsibility of being the first in their families that will go to college. Once inside the program, everyone faces a double academic burden, which means that the uphill road to reach their goals has become even steeper.

“ *Many experiences make you a more responsible person because you carry two academic loads, not just the regular high school classes, but you spend the whole day studying. Then it forges a spirit of striving for what you want.*”

Oportunidades Student

The increased school responsibilities in phase one makes some students decide not to continue and abandon the possibility to build a different future. Unfortunately, this reality will only be visible years later, when they see their

classmates that continued with the program, attending higher studies in different academic institutions for higher education (phase 2) and finding their first jobs (as part of phase 3). Whereas those who couldn't continue, may have to enter the labor market in precarious conditions, being unable to continue with their higher studies.

“*Something that highly motivated me was that everyone in the group had the same purpose, it was hard work for everybody that had additional homework from school. That motivated me. I saw my classmates working hard as well. If they made an effort, why don't I do the same thing and strive to do well here? Entering the program is not like it's going to get easier, on the contrary... but the people from the program and classmates motivate us to see that one is capable of dreaming and going further than one can imagine... give the extra mile. I lived it within the [program]*”

Oportunidades Student

The support among the students to persevere in the program is essential. In some cases, giving up and abandoning the program seems like the best option. However, the words of encouragement and the energy from one student to the other is what builds the strength to persevere and conclude phase 1.

“*I wanted to leave the program. Then a person from Santa Ana told me that I should continue. So, I thank that person very much. We motivate each other.*”

Oportunidades Student

The program's key foundation for the success of its students is the building of significant relationships. An environment where each student is seen as a person, where everyone's dreams are defined individually while evaluating their feasibility within the country's reality, where you plan and support the work and constant effort that produce good results.

These dynamics are not only perceived by the **Oportunidades** youth since their entrance to the program, they are also internalized and adopted as life values

(commitment, respect, integrity, thankfulness, resilience, solidarity and equitability) that greatly enhance their real chances of success, defined beyond their grades, drawn from an idea of responsible citizenship concerned about the construction of a better country.

“ *That’s what’s great about [the Program], it gives us a feeling of appreciation for what we’ve received and [it teaches us] to give back because, since the first year, we are taught to volunteer... I feel that it has been instilled, in our little heads, that we must to do something [to pay it forward], because we are lucky to be studying. We see people around us every day that can’t do that. I realize that I am able to do it, and they are not”*

Oportunidades Student

THE FAMILIES OF THE OPORTUNIDADES PROGRAM

The effective integration of parents in the learning process of their children is a major factor that boosts motivation and perseverance in young people of the educational system. **Oportunidades** has made of this a fundamental pillar that has been very successful, integrating parents to create an extended educational community.

“ *The [program] is very different. It tries to involve parents, in the same way the relationship works with us, [...] it’s not just there to deliver report cards... there are several activities that the [program] does to improve these relationships. The [program even] helps the relationships between parents and their children.”*

Oportunidades Student

The youth consulted say that at their educational institutions, indifferent or conflicting relationships may occur between them and their parents, as well as with the administration and teachers. On the other hand, at **Oportunidades** the relationships are very positive and are reinforced by different activities (such as report card meetings, family education program, achievement Expos,

and end-of-the-year activities, to name a few.) There is a [genuine effort to relate] to the adults who are responsible for the students, to talk to them and further discuss specific aspects of their educational process in phase 1.

“*During parent and teachers’ meetings...my program’s director approached the parents to meet them; good relationships were built between them. The relationships were built not just with students but also with the parents. It inspires the entire family; it serves as an inspiration for younger siblings.*”

Oportunidades Student

It further highlights the fact that the parents who are indifferent to the educational process at public schools, become fully involved with the activities offered to them by **Oportunidades**.

“*For example, my father never went to anything at my school, but he always attended the Oportunidades’ [activities], I don’t know why, but he always did.*”

Oportunidades Student

Clearly, **Oportunidades** includes incentives such as activities that promote health and well-being for families (such as free medical exams and grocery packages, among others). There are testimonials of gratitude about health evaluations that have allowed the detection and effective treatment of medical complications that otherwise could have had detrimental outcomes.

“*Not only did we as children receive the benefits, but they did also. I remember that there was a program where grocery packages were given out and other activities, such as eye exams and breast cancer checkups. For example, my mom found out she had some complications thanks to those exams, meaning that, if we hadn’t found out that early, I don’t know what would have happened. From my family and mom’s behalf we are thankful for that opportunity.*”

Oportunidades Student

Parents participating in the available activities are aware that the [program] sets out for their children a long-term vision that does not end in high school, but rather continues with university studies and their access to the job market. This is reinforced by the parents' testimonies about how their children, who successfully complete the three phases, have found good job opportunities, which transforms a horizon of possibility into an existing reality for the families of the program.

STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE

Oportunidades has other key features that make it unique in its ability to become an effective resilience building environment. These have to do with its identity as an educational program and with the conviction, as part of its vision, that no talented adolescents should be left without opportunities, such as the following:

- **A** Confidence in the work of all team members (administration staff, faculty and students).
- **B** Acceptance of change as a constant to address the needs of every student.
- **C** Prioritizing the basic needs of young people.
- **D** An institutional mission that transcends the temporary nature of a complementary educational program and goes beyond a simple job placement.

Interviews with the program staff highlight a commitment to transforming young people from challenging socio-economic contexts into agents of change for their communities and country.

Trust

The team recognizes that the success of the program rests on the Gloria de Kriete Foundation's confidence in the management and implementation model of the different initiatives and activities covered by each phase. This trust is passed on to the staff and teachers and ends up reflecting on the students, an image where responsibility in a job well done strengthens confidence.

The staff interviewed, unanimously showed high expectations towards the performance and the professional projects of the **Oportunidades**’ adolescents. This setting fosters an environment where creating possibilities is normal, real, planned and, with the right attitudes, becomes achievable according to the abilities of each student.

Oportunidades is extremely careful in managing the expectations that students define and pose as their potential career and employability futures. This is where the construction begins, with their feet on solid ground, where better opportunities can be projected gradually and consistently with discipline, responsibility and commitment of each young person.

Change as a constant for educational improvement

A second relevant feature of **Oportunidades** lies in embracing change in its different stages, such as new teaching methodologies, educational projects, and use of school materials. It is understood that one of the main obstacles to the improvement of the educational quality lies in the rigidity of the institutional processes of the educational system. **Oportunidades** assumes flexibility as part of its institutional identity and constantly promotes the discussion of ideas that strengthen the students’ education.

For example, a teacher tells us how the program’s experiences change in a natural and constant way:

“ For me, *Oportunidades* has always had that way of accepting and anticipating change, and it’s one of the reasons why I’ve always liked being here, working with those latent modifications, either on the go or planned for the future...all the changes made so far, in any form, are always focused on giving the best experience for adolescents. It’s something that impacts me because the aim is always for the benefit of the students we serve.”

Teacher at the program

This constant change can be seen in the permanent evolution of activities and phases at **Oportunidades**. In phase 1 (Complementary Studies) the program originally started with three subjects: English as a Second Language, Computer Programming and Values. Nevertheless, they then realized that it was necessary to incorporate other disciplines that would create a solid foundation for their students to cope with their university courses. The expansion of the program's first phase now covers eight subjects: Values, Entrepreneurship, Spanish Language Arts, Mathematics, English as a Second Language, Science, Vocational Guidance and Computer Programming.

In phase 3 (Labor Insertion) between 2009 and 2012, the intervention went from following-up and monitoring the location where the graduates from phase 2 were being admitted, to being, since 2013, a job placement service through a job bank (in alliance with many companies). Furthermore, starting 2014 it has incorporated an employability training program (which includes a wide variety of workshops to reinforce the employability skills of **Oportunidades** citizens).

Understanding that academic achievements are built (or destroyed) by families and communities

It is commonly believed that by providing young people with adequate learning spaces, relevant and up-to-date materials, and good teachers is enough to achieve educational accomplishments. Although all the former are necessary, to assume that a young person coming from a precarious socio-economic environment is ready to learn just by showing up to the classroom underestimates the fact that his or her journey begins much earlier; in a home without electricity or drinking water or where three meals a day may not always be available. In the same manner, one must not assume that communities where students live are not environments filled with violence, and with emotional voids that affect the young person's potential to learn and to move forward in life.

Oportunidades acknowledges these needs as a reality that cannot be ignored if it wants to create real opportunities for young people. This commitment has made it possible for the program to include, among other, the following benefits:

visual health, daily lunches, uniforms, academic incentives, school supplies, grocery packages for the family, transportation stipend, and specialized professional support for each student.

There are key moments within the evolution of the program, like the introduction of free meals for students that marks a before and after in understanding the families' dynamics. This is how a person describes it:

“ For me, one of the greatest moments was when we added lunch, although it is not purely academic, it had such a strong impact in academic performance because many of our students live in such complex situations that they had only one meal per day, so here we had fainting problems, dizziness, headaches... the moment we started giving them lunch, everything changed, [the symptoms disappeared].”

Scholarships Director

Similarly, the life-stories of adolescents, in many cases, do not help their emotional well-being. A teacher describes the family backgrounds of his students as follows:

“ Many of them will come from situations of [domestic] violence... many of them struggle to survive emotionally within their families. “

Teacher at the program

The emotional support provided by professionals specialized in mental health-care makes it possible for students to have access to the necessary psychological care, either as part of two subjects, Values and Vocational Guidance, or in the scholarships department, where they are also served by competent professionals. A strong psychological support component is essential to help these adolescents overcome their risk-filled environments. It's a necessary support, without which many of them would probably be unable to complete their high school studies, to plan on studying a technical or university career, or to dream of job opportunities that transform their lives and those of their families and communities.

The Salvadoran educational system is notably lacking in psychological support, not only for their students, but also for their teachers. These shortcomings strongly impact the youth's resilience capabilities. **Oportunidades** understands that this support is critical, not only for academic success, but also for the construction of citizenship.

An institutional mission that transcends employment

When analyzing the three phases at **Oportunidades**, it is clear to see that the final goal is for young people to get a job and become productive for the country. It's evident that, after a large investment that may vary between 5 years (for those who study a technical career [...]) and 8 years (for those who attend long-term university studies - bachelors' degrees and engineering degrees), this is a natural and desired indicator of the program.

In fact, to date, around 600 young people who have been beneficiaries of the program and the ones that have received employability advice are occupying fixed job positions in various areas. They are the example of medium and long-term commitments, as explained by the General Director:

“ We are aware that the impact is long-term, 5 - 8 years to wait for the reward, it's waiting a long time to see that... there is a [high] level of commitment; we understand the concept of delayed gratification.”

General Director

Nonetheless, there is much more behind what the whole team, of both the Gloria de Kriete Foundation and **Oportunidades**, expresses of what this initiative means to them. Some individuals in the program talk about changing the world every day:

“ The unwritten philosophy... we do think we change the world every day, because for every action that we bestow on to someone, his or her world is being changed; we open their minds. The team puts all their heart into it.”

General Director

Others refer to it as a dream that became true:

“ *Oportunidades, [...] was like a dream come true, I do firmly believe that education is the only way to change the country.*”

Scholarships Director

These stories and visions, felt from the heart of the program, motivate many to keep moving forward through the difficulties and challenges that **Oportunidades**' adolescents must overcome.

REAL OPPORTUNITIES... BEYOND THE ORIGIN

School environments are, in themselves, resilience promoters, as could be assessed from a qualitative perspective. The school environment plays a key role in the generation of protective factors that can promote resilience and positive outcomes in various areas of life, despite the adverse conditions of individuals (Morrison and Allen, 2007; Tolan et al., 2004; MacDonald and Valdivieso, 2000; Durlak, 1998; Bernard, 1991; and Wang et al., 1994).

In this regard, the quantitative analysis carried out aims to establish the extent to which the conditions of young people that apply or are joining the **Oportunidades** program affect both, the possibility of entering and the successful completion of the program. If the program is successful in its capacity to develop real opportunities, differences in backgrounds should “disappear” over time and should not influence the students’ performance.

We would hope that, to some extent, navigating through this program could coexist in a positive way with the conditions of origin of students, helping them to foster protective factors, and boosting their academic and professional achievements. Measuring this effect and establishing its causality without a quasi-experimental design is difficult. It is a particular difficulty to this approach because there is no data on the performance of young people who did not enter the program that can be

compared to those that did, which makes the construction of a control group or counterfactual scenario impossible⁴.

However, it's possible to make a descriptive or correlation analysis to help us answer the question. The logic is as follows. It is noted that the presence of protective or risk factors in the conditions of origin of the young people studied, affects both their probability of admission and of desertion of the program. For example, variables such as gender, age, place of birth and their place of origin (See Annex 1).

The results are consistent with the theory. The presence of resilience-promoting factors was associated with higher probabilities of entering the program and of achievement, and vice versa. However, young people who stay and graduate from phase 1 of the program are exposed to a range of resilience-generating factors (such as positive attachment figures and generation of expectations), which one expects to increase their chances of academic success even in the presence of adverse conditions of origin. This would suggest that the program has an effect on resilience.

Following this logic, young people who complete the program should show higher academic achievement than those who don't, regardless of their initial endowment of protective or risk factors. Even though we don't have a comparison group, it is possible to measure the performance of students who complete the program on standardized scales to which all students in the country are subjected, and compare it with the results at the national level, including subgroup level decompositions. In this case, we used the PAES aptitude test as the main metric and proposed the following hypotheses:

- 01 The variables of protective factors and expectations' measurements set out in Table 1 should not be significant in predicting the PAES test grades of the

4/ This also adds to the fact that the sample becomes even smaller, as we can only analyze the classes of 2018 and 2019 since they are the only ones who have graduated and therefore the only ones who have a PAES score.

Oportunidades students. This would demonstrate, in part, that the program has had an effect of generating protective factors that translates to academic achievement, regardless of the conditions of the students' origins.

- 02 The **Oportunidades** students' PAES grades should be higher in comparison to other relevant parameters of the test results at the national level (for example, the national average.)

TABLE 1/
Results of the linear regression model: PAES

	DEPENDENT VARIABLE	
	(1) PAES Grade	(2) Log PAES Grade
FP1	-0.232 (0.267)	-0.0338 (0.316)
FP2	-0.170 (0.253)	-0.0234 (0.286)
FP3	0.0446 (0.166)	0.00519 (0.247)
EXP1	-0.0732 (0.300)	-0.0110 (0.271)
EXP2	-0.000828 (0.987)	-0.000237 (0.971)
EXP3	0.111 (0.102)	0.0145 (0.179)
Woman (1=yes)	-0.175 (0.158)	-0.0240 (0.181)
Log (Average Grade)	6.650 (0.079)	0.886 (0.129)
Constant	-4.889 (0.122)	0.380 (0.378)
Controls by cohort	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic Controls	Yes	Yes
N	115	115

Values for p in brackets

Robust standard correlation errors within each cohort

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Source: Author's creation.

The results of the detailed model are as follows:

- A** No protective factor has a significant effect on predicting the final PAES score, both in level as in logarithmic scale. This implies that the conditions of origin of the adolescents lose relevance to explain the PAES grades, conditional when finishing phase 1 of **Oportunidades** (something that was relevant when predicting the entry and desertion from the program).
- B** Gender effects also disappear. This is relevant as it was determined that the fact of being a woman and certain risk factors related to adverse gender perceptions (for example that women are less fit for the labor market or must remain at home) were relevant to explain the probability of entering the program.

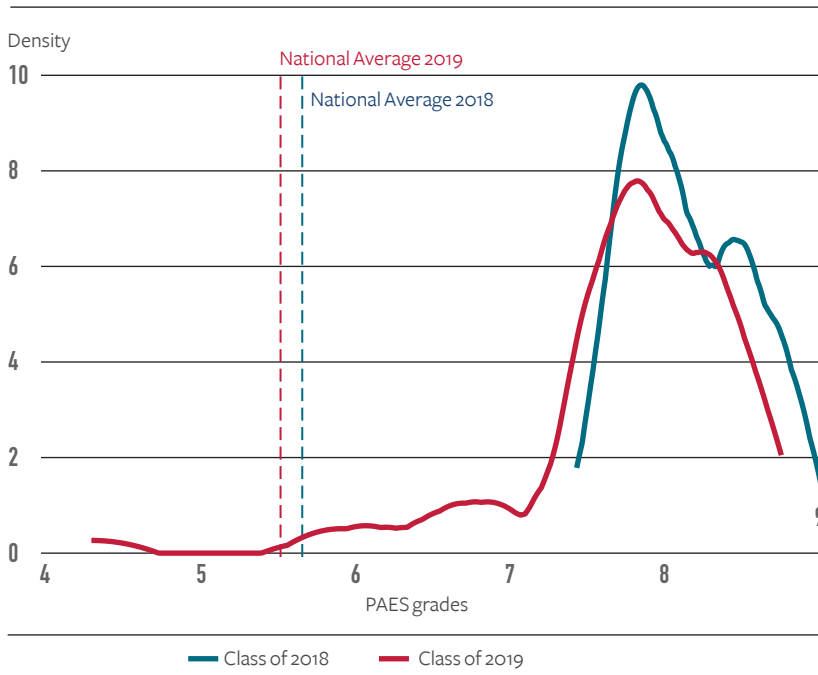
The fact that there are no gender differences in the final grades of the PAES is also a sign that **Oportunidades** is successful in generating the necessary conditions and the protective factors to mitigate any possible disadvantage caused by being a woman. This is reflected in the parity of results in PAES test among men who complete the program.

As mentioned under point A, it is important to analyze the results obtained in the PAES tests as they allow to conclude that the results of the **Oportunidades** students are outstanding and constitute academic achievement, while not affected by the students' conditions of origin:

- C** Chart 1 shows the distribution of grades by graduating classes, compared to the national average for the corresponding year. The average grades of PAES test for the **Oportunidades** program's classes of 2018 and 2019 were 8.15 and 7.76 respectively. They are higher than the national average grades for the same years (5.66 and 5.52). At the same time, it is possible to see that distribution is concentrated around values higher than 7.00, with very little density below this value (in fact, only the class of 2019 has values below this threshold).

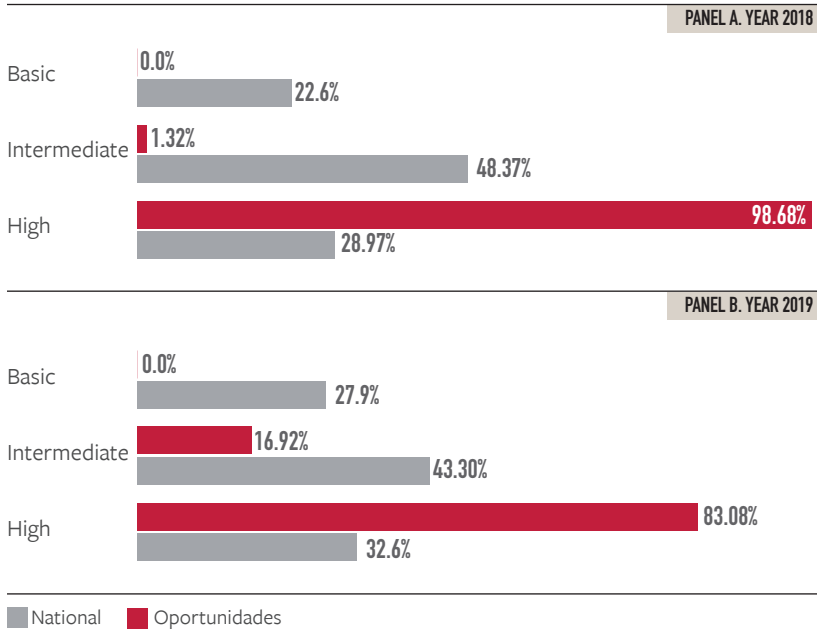
- Finally, [comparing] the distribution of the national level versus **Oportunidades** students' scores, we used the Ministry of Education classification of PAES grades, which has three levels: Basic (0.00 to 3.75), Intermediate (3.76 to 7.50) and High (7.51 to 10.00). Chart 2 shows the percentage of the student population at the national level and those of **Oportunidades** program that fall into each category. It highlights that the vast majority of students in the program rank in the Higher category, with few students in the Intermediate category and none in the Basic level. This is significantly different to the national grade distribution: most are at the intermediate level and less than a third at the upper level.

CHART 1/
Distribution of PAES grades per Oportunidades Class (Kernel Density) and national average grades for each year



Source: Author's creation from data from **Oportunidades** Program (2019) and from Ministry of Education (2019) and (2018)

CHART 2/
Percentage of students by level of achievement in PAES,
Oportunidades Program vs. National Level



Source: Author's creation. Data source: **Oportunidades** program (2019) and Ministry of Education (2019) and (2018).

04

FINAL THOUGHTS

Analysis of the effect of the **Oportunidades** program shows that it is an educational project that does build emotional and pedagogical resilience by providing concrete academic tools. It also raises a strong identity and a sense of belonging in its members.

This is achieved thanks to a winning combination in the educational environment. It encompasses passionate and well-trained teachers who take on a mentoring role, staff committed to the learning of their students, a flexible curriculum whose priority is to ensure learning, and a safe environment of good and healthy coexistence. Among the main lessons learned from the program's experience, that reinforces proven conclusions on what works in education, the following may be outlined:

- The quality of the teachers is the foundation of the educational program's standard. The **Oportunidades** team that assumes the teaching role is resilient and capable of facing the socio-emotional inequalities of their students. They have also been beneficiaries of quality training and mentoring.
- Schools must acknowledge the social and family disadvantages with which the students enter the classroom. Programs like **Oportunidades** show that it is possible to overcome economic and socio-affective inequalities of the students if undertaken in a determined and systematic manner.

- Flexible and adaptive curricula are more functional than rigid ones. Of particular importance, is the inclusion of socioemotional and citizenship education in it.

In short, quality education, one that promotes self-regulation, autonomy, critical thinking and creativity, is a real tool to overcome inequalities, as demonstrated by the experience at **Oportunidades**.

It's interesting to note that gender-based social inequalities may cause young women entering the program to arrive with greater deficiencies. The program should consider gender gaps. Young women are more exposed to risk factors, therefore, require further development of the ability of facing and overcoming these situations (more protective factors). They would require greater cognitive and emotional levelling than their male peers.

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ANNEX 1. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

To operationalize resilience, six numerical scales were generated from the questions of the **Oportunidades** program's admission survey. We focused on measuring (1) the presence of protective factors and (2) the presence of high expectations, in agreement with of Benard's approach (1991).

Table A.1 shows the scales generated and the questions from which they were constructed. As is evident, 3 measurements were generated, seeking to capture the presence of protective factors (or, equivalently, the absence of risk factors) and 3 that add information about youth's expectations.

One difficulty with this exercise is that the instrument was not designed to measure resilience or protective factors, therefore, the number of options, the dimension they seek to capture, and the connotation of the questions are not uniform. This means that they cannot be added in a single measurement⁵. For this reason, various measurements were generated in such a way that they were internally consistent.

5/ In addition to this, the predominance of discrete data (particularly in the admission questionnaire) and the few observations limit the use of multivariate techniques.

TABLE A.1./
Measures of protective factors and expectations employed
(FP =Protective Factors, EXP= Expectations)

MEASURE	DIMENSION TO CAPTURE	CALCULATION METHODOLOGY	VARIATION RANGE
FP1	Presence of protective factors	<p>Simple average at the individual level “i” of scores to answers to the following questions:</p> <p>P3.2 Is there an adult in my life who cares about my future?</p> <p>P3.5 I can find many ways to solve any problem</p> <p>P3.7 I have a best friend at school</p> <p>P3.8 I feel safe at school</p> <p>P3.9 My teachers make me feel that the work we do at school is important</p> <p>P3.10 In my school I have the opportunity to do what I do best, every day</p> <p>P3.11 In the last seven days I have received recognition or encouragement for doing a good job</p> <p>P3.12 My school is committed to developing each student’s strengths</p> <p>P3.13 I have at least one teacher who makes me excited about the future</p> <p>The options for all the questions are as follows: 1= Totally Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat Agree, 4=Agree, 5= Totally Agree</p>	<p>1 to 5</p> <p>Where 5 is the value representing the best possible situation</p>
FP2	Absence of risk factors (gender related)	<p>Simple average at the individual level “i” of answers to the following questions:</p> <p>5.1 It’s right for men to earn more money than women</p> <p>5.2 My family equally supports male and female family members to continue studying</p> <p>5.3 Changing diapers, bathing and feeding a child are a mother’s responsibilities</p> <p>5.4 A good wife should devote herself exclusively to the care of her household and her husband</p> <p>5.5 If a man impregnates a woman, the child is the responsibility of both parents</p> <p>5.6 In general, women have the same ability as men to hold important job positions</p> <p>The options for all the questions are as follows: 1= Totally Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat Agree, 4=Agree, 5= Totally Agree</p>	<p>1 to 5</p> <p>Where 5 is the value representing the best possible situation.</p> <p>Answers to questions with negative connotations were coded (e.g. 5,1) so that the value of 5 represents the least desirable situation and 1 the most desirable situation</p>

MEASURE	DIMENSION TO CAPTURE	CALCULATION METHODOLOGY	VARIATION RANGE
FP3	Exposure to risk factors from violence	<p>Simple average at the individual level “i” of answers to the following questions:</p> <p>6.1 In the last year, how many days have you stopped going to school because you feel at risk?</p> <p>6.1.a On the way to school</p> <p>6.1.b At School</p> <p>6.1.c Leaving School</p> <p>6.2 In the last year, how many times have you been the victim of violence (bullying, threats, beatings, assaults, rape)?</p> <p>6.2.a At School</p> <p>6.2.b Outside of School</p> <p>Options to question 6.1 are: 0=None, 1= 1 to 5 days, 2=5 to 10 days, 3=More than 10 days.</p> <p>Options to question 6.2 are: 0=None, 1= One time, 2= Twice, 3= Three times, 4= More than 3 times</p>	<p>0 to 4</p> <p>Where 4 represents the worst possible situation and 0 the best</p>
EXP1	Self-assessment of ability to achieve academic goals	<p>The difference between the academic degree they would like to achieve and the degree they think they will accomplish, using the following questions:</p> <p>P1.1 What’s the highest level of education you think you’re going to achieve?</p> <p>P1.2 What is the maximum level of education you would like to reach?</p> <p>The options for both questions are as follows: 1=Middle School, 2= High School, 3= Technical degree or Teacher, 4=Bachelor’s degree, 5= Post-graduate degree</p> <p>Calculation formula:</p> $EXP3_i = P1.2_i - P1.1_i$ <p>Where $P1.1_i$ and $P1.2_i$ are respectively, the scores of questions P1.1 and P1.2 for each individual “i”</p>	<p>-4 to 0</p> <p>Where 0 is the value that represents the best situation (there is no gap between the degree you want to achieve and the one you think you will achieve)</p> <p>and -4 represents the worst situation</p>

MEASURE	DIMENSION TO CAPTURE	CALCULATION METHODOLOGY	VARIATION RANGE
EXP2	Perception of the salary range that can be accessed, given a specific age and type of education	<p>Simple average at the individual level “i” of the salary range to which each young person believes they can access with a certain type of education using the following questions:</p> <p>P2.6 How much do you think you could earn a month when you're 30 at a job of your choice?</p> <p>P2.6.1 With High School only P2.6.2 With a Technical or short career P2.6.3 With a University Degree</p> <p>The options for the three questions are: 1= 0 to 210 USD, 2= 210 to 400 USD, 3= 400 to 700 USD, 4=700 to 1,000 USD, 5= 1,000 to 2,000 USD, 6= 2,000 USD or more.</p> <p>The calculation formula is as follows:</p> $EXP2_i = 1/3 (P2.6.1_i + P2.6.2_i + P2.6.3_i)$ <p>Where each variable represents the value for the individual “i” in the corresponding question</p>	<p>1 to 6</p> <p>Where 6 is the value that represents the best situation</p>
EXP3		<p>Simple average at the individual level “i” of scores to answers to the following questions:</p> <p>P3.1 I'm sure I'll graduate from high school P3.6 I know I'll find a good job after I graduate</p> <p>The options for all the questions are the following: 1= Totally Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat Agree, 4=Agree, 5= Totally Agree</p>	<p>1 to 5</p> <p>Where 5 is the value representing the best possible situation</p>

Source: Author's creation.

EFFECT ON PROGRAM SELECTION

The first exercise was to assess whether protective factors, operationalized as shown in Table A.1, have an impact on the probability of entering the program in the presence of a series of control variables. The model used was logistic regression, where the dependent variable “y” is dichotomous and takes the value of 0 if the individual “i” was not admitted to the program and a value of 1 if admitted.

The functional form of the model is standard⁶ and considers the probability of being admitted to the program as a function of a series of regressors or independent variables. The regressor vector is composed of the following:

- 01 A control variable by gender
- 02 The measures of protective factors and expectations are specified in Table A.1, in other words, $FP1_i$, $FP2_i$, $FP3_i$, $EXP1_i$, $EXP2_i$ y $EXP3_i$
- 03 A series of control variables by cohort
- 04 The educational level of parents as a socio-economic proxy.

The main results are shown in Table A.2, where column 1 represents the main specification, and the rest a set of alternative specifications using only subsets of the protective and expectation measurements. The main results are as follows:

- A It stands out that of the six measurements of protective factors and expectations, the only ones that are statistically significant are the following:
 - i. Protective factors, number 2 ($FP2_i$), which measures the absence of risk factors related to gender conceptions (for example, the conception that a woman should stay at home and take care of her husband, or that women are not equally capable to hold job positions as men)
 - ii. Expectations, number 1 ($EXP1_i$), which measures the gap between the educational level that the students would like to reach and the one that they actually believe are going to effectively complete.
- B Concerning the $FP2_i$ measurement, an improvement in this scale implies less predominance of negative gender-related conceptions within the respondents, which indicates that its environment and previous experience has reinforced less or sought to counteract such conceptions. In quantitative terms, this implies an increase of 1 point in the $FP2_i$ measurement, increases the probability of being selected into the program by a factor of 1.80⁷.

6/ Specifically, $\Pr[y_i = 1|x_i] = (\exp(\beta_1 + \beta_2 x_i)) / (1 + \exp(\beta_1 + \beta_2 x_i))$, where y_i is the dependent variable, and $y_i = 1$ indicates that the individual was selected for the **Oportunidades** program and x_i represents the vector of regressors or independent variables.

7/ The regression coefficient is 0.59, so the change in the probability of defecting (odds-ratio) is equal to $e^{0.59} = 1.80$.

TABLE A.2./
Results of the Logistic Regression Model: Joining the Oportunidades Program

	DEPENDENT VARIABLE: JOINS THE OPORTUNIDADES PROGRAM (1=YES)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
FP1	0.216 (0.312)	0.163 (0.557)	
FP2	0.593*** (0.000)	0.627*** (0.000)	
FP3	0.0482 (0.711)	0.0221 (0.875)	
EXP1	0.0951*** (0.000)		0.0822* (0.029)
EXP2	-0.0237 (0.736)		-0.0114 (0.837)
EXP3	-0.137 (0.472)		0.0216 (0.929)
Woman (1=y)	-0.425*** (0.000)	-0.432*** (0.000)	-0.426*** (0.000)
Constant	-4.496* (0.012)	-5.115*** (0.000)	-1.637 (0.146)
Controls by cohort	Sí	Sí	Sí
Socio-economic controls	Sí	Sí	Sí
N	1323	1365	1332

Values “p” in brackets

Robust standard correlation errors within each cohort * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

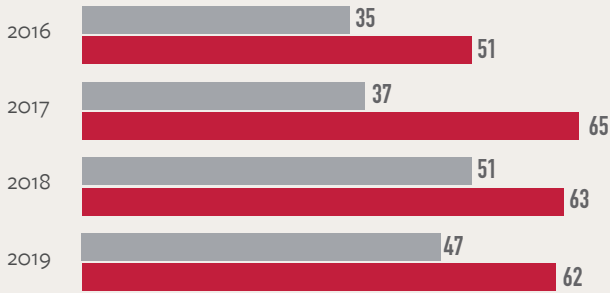
Source: Author’s creation.

- C** The EXP_1 , expectations measurement also presents interesting results. An improvement of 1 point in this measurement is associated with an increase in the probability of entering the program by a factor of 1.01. Although this effect is quantitatively smaller than that of the FP_2 , variable, it is indicative that young people who have a smaller or no gap between their expectations of academic achievement and what they effectively believe they will achieve, are more likely to join **Oportunidades**.
- D** Another relevant element is that women are less likely to enter the program simply because they are women. Being a woman reduces the chances

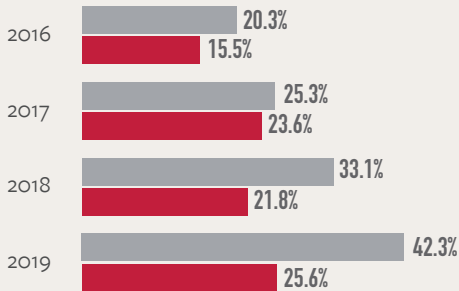
of entering the program by a factor of 0.65. This can be evidenced in a simple way by analyzing the number of women applying to **Oportunidades** versus the total admitted. Even though the number of women applicants admitted is higher than that of men in all the years analyzed (Figure A.1, panel B). Continuing with our conceptual framework, this generates evidence that women are more exposed to risk factors that limit their eligibility for the program.

FIGURE A.1./
Number of students admitted by cohort and admittance rate

PANEL A. Number of students admitted by gender



PANEL B. Admittance rate



■ Men ■ Women

Source: Author's creation with Oportunidades Program's data.

IMPACT ON PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE

The same regressors from the previous section were used to evaluate the effect of baseline conditions on performance in the program (such as protective factors, expectation measurements and control variables). They explain the added average grades, and the fact of receiving recognition, in the form of Honor Roll or Principal's Honor Roll, or warning letters. Two types of models were used, one linear regression with robust standard errors for the grades-dependent variable (which is continuous) and another of logistic regression, similar to the previous section for the probability of receiving recognitions or warnings (dichotomous variables).

None of the protective factor regressors or expectations had a statistically significant effect. Possible explanations for this, are the following:

- A** The population studied was reduced substantially in relation to the previous model. The focus here was only on students who were admitted to the program (336 valid observations versus 1,323 in the previous case), which significantly reduced the statistical power of the model
- B** Since the program itself is a vehicle that generates protective factors, this effect could offset the potential negative effects of base conditions by reducing their impact on the performance. It's not possible to statistically separate this effect due to data constraints.
- C** The population under study suffers from self-selection induced by the admission process. According to the results of the previous section, this group, on average, has better protective factors and levels of expectations than those that were not selected.

THE EFFECT ON DESERTION FROM THE PROGRAM

Using an approach similar to the one that sought to explain the effect of protective factors and expectations on the probability of entering the program, a model was built seeking to explore the effect of these regressors on the probability of deserting from the program. The regressors used are the following:

- 01 A control variable by gender
- 02 The measurements of protective factors and expectations specified in Table A.1, in other words $FP1_p, FP2_p, FP3_p, EXP1_p, EXP2_p, y EXP3_p$
- 03 Students' average grades as a control variable
- 04 A series of control variables by cohort
- 05 The education level of the parents as a proxy of socio-economic level.

The results are shown in Table A.3, which highlight the following:

- A In this case, the expectation measurement number 1 ($EXP1_i$) is statistically significant and has effects in the expected direction. A higher level of expectations for the future reduces the probability of deserting from the program.
- B On the other hand, an increase of 1 unit in the $EXP1_i$ measurement, when showing improvements, indicates a smaller or no gap between the level of education desired by the student and the one he believes he can achieve. This is associated with a reduction in the probability of desertion by a factor of 0.68. One way to visualize this effect is shown in Figure A.2, which contains the standard distribution of this measurement for both deserters and non-deserters, where the latter group has a distribution charged around higher and less dispersed values than the first.
- C The $FP3_i$ measurement indicates the presence of risk factors related to violence. This is significant in specification 1 at 10.5% significance and 5% in specification 2 (which omits the protective factor variables). This is considered worth discussing. According to the model, a 1-point increase on this scale is associated with an increase in the probability of desertion by a factor of 1.64. Figure A.3 shows the standardized distribution of the measurement for both deserting and non-deserting students. It's clear that non-deserting students generate a more concentrated distribution around lower values of the measure.
- D Finally, one of the variables of the control vector by socioeconomic characteristics is the educational level of the father, where statistically significant effects were found, [...] specifically as follows:

- i. Adolescents whose father has elementary school education reduces his or her probability of desertion by a factor of 0.25 relative to an adolescent whose father has no education
- ii. Adolescents whose father has high school education reduces his or her probability of desertion by a factor of 0.28 relative to those whose father has no education.

TABLE A.3./
Results of the logistic regression model: desertion from the program

	DEPENDENT VARIABLE: DESERTS FROM OPORTUNIDADES (1=YES)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
FP1	0.324 (0.436)	0.380 (0.152)	
FP2	-0.768 (0.189)	-0.674 (0.249)	
FP3	0.402 (0.105)	0.500* (0.044)	
EXP1	-0.477*** (0.000)		-0.498*** (0.000)
EXP2	-0.121 (0.485)		-0.0862 (0.721)
EXP3	0.196 (0.607)		0.0939 (0.392)
Woman (1=yes)	0.461 (0.337)	0.543 (0.217)	0.295 (0.484)
Log (Ave. grade)	-19.48** (0.006)	-20.11** (0.008)	-19.63* (0.011)
Constant	39.91** (0.009)	41.12* (0.010)	38.57* (0.017)
Controls by cohort	YES	YES	YES
Socio-economic controls	YES	YES	YES
N	335	348	338

Values "p" in brackets

Robust standard correlation errors within each cohort

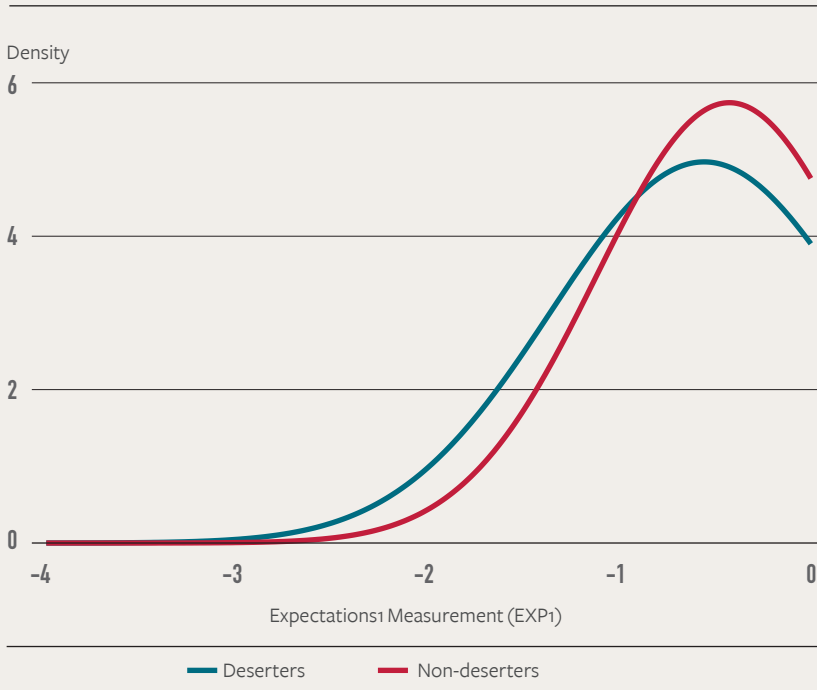
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Source: Author's creation.

- Ⓔ Despite the data limitations and the size of the population analyzed, these results present favorable evidence that the conditions of origin of each young person can have a fundamental role in ensuring their permanence in an academic program, regardless of the resilience development that the program could generate.

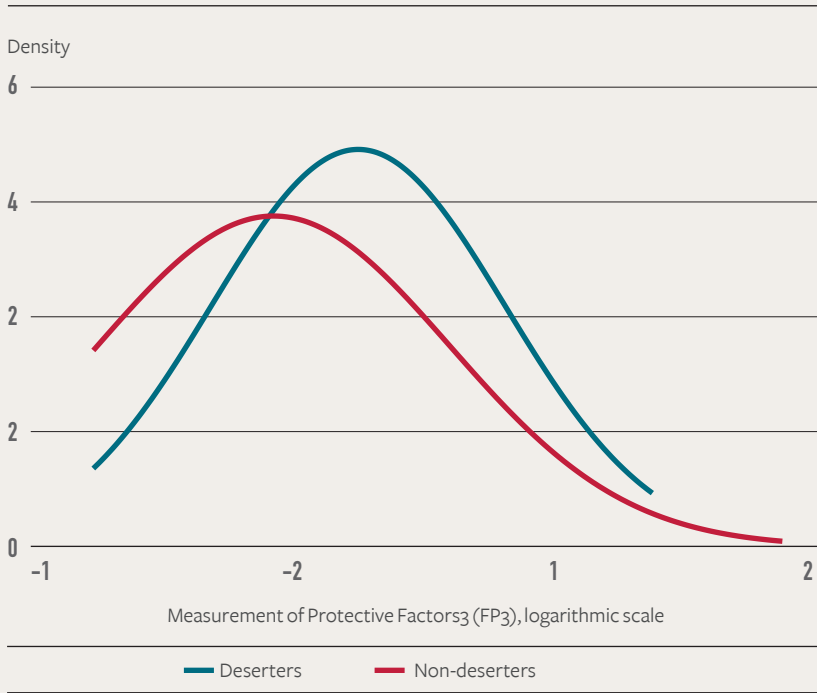
FIGURE A.2./

Standardized distribution of the EXP1 measurement for deserters and non-deserters from the Oportunidades program (higher values of the EX1 measurement reflect a better situation)



Source: Author's creation.

FIGURE A.3./
Standardized distribution of FP3 measurement for deserters and non-deserters in the Oportunidades program (lower values of FP3 reflect better situation)



Source: Author's creation.

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ANNEX 2. DETAIL OF INTERVIEWS OF THE QUALITATIVE PHASE

TYPE OF INTERVIEW	PARTICIPANT	ROLE	DATE
Individual (3)	Juana Jule	General Director	October 9, 2019
	Andrea Schildknecht de Méndez	Scholarships Director	November 11, 2019
	Wilson Ramírez	Mathematics Teacher	October 29, 2019
Group (1)	Douglas Juárez	Phase 1 Graduates from Oportunidades Program/ University students	December 14, 2019
	Carlos López		
	Isaí Martínez		
	Edith Oliva		
	Adriana Morán		
	Daniel Alvarado		
	Francisco Murillo		
	Douglas Henríquez		
	Katerin Ponce		
	Santiago Monge		
	Tania Estupinián		
	Wendy Ramos		
	Kevin Benavides		
Julio Flores			
Ema Mejía			
Melvin Cifuentes			
Adriana López			

02

This document is the second in the CONOCIENDO series. This collection aims to present critical evaluations of projects and programs in the educational area to Salvadoran society, designed and implemented by civil society, that could serve as inspiration for the design and implementation of public policies.

The Foundation for Higher Education (Fundación de Estudios Superiores) is committed to the evidence-based discussion of issues related to education in its broader definition. For this reason, this second document chooses the experience of the **Oportunidades program** of the Gloria de Kriete Foundation, a complementary school program for academically talented young people with limited resources, that accompanies them up to 8 years, from the beginning of high school until they have access to the labor market. This publication documents a proposal that values and promotes individual resilience through avant-garde and holistic education.

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