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The Education and Development of Peruvian Youth: Opportunities, Challenges, and Possibilities

Laura A. Valdiviezo, *University of Massachusetts - Amherst*
Dina Lopez



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Chapter 11

The Education and Development of Peruvian Youth:

Opportunities, Challenges, and Possibilities

Laura Valdiviezo and Dina López

Introduction

According to recent national reports, there are approximately 8.4 million young people between the ages of 15 and 29 in Peru—representing close to one third of the country’s population (Ojeda, 2015). Though a large majority of Peruvian youth is concentrated in Lima and other urban areas, their lived experiences are extremely diverse and differentiated along gender, racial, class, and ethnic lines. Youth in Peru, like in other multicultural and multilingual societies experiencing economic vulnerability and dealing with the legacy of nearly 20 years of political unrest (1980s-2000s), have been deeply impacted by violence and inequalities that persist in Peruvian society. However, understanding youth in Peru requires acknowledging them beyond the consequences of inequality and instability and beyond perspectives that simply label them as a population at risk. Policymakers and civil society need to broaden their views on youth and emphasize their efforts to include them as actors who can contribute their voice and vision to address the challenges they and society face.

In this chapter we offer a view of Peruvian youth across social and economic contexts, to understand them against the backdrop of contextual disparities, not only in what makes them diverse but also in what makes them part of a group that deserves specific attention through policy-related and programmatic initiatives. Because of our background as educators concerned

with issues of inequality and their impact on children and youth from vulnerable sectors – including linguistically and culturally diverse populations – our goal is to offer a perspective on youth that cuts across ethnic, linguistic, and cultural sectors. We find that most studies and reports that address Peruvian youth tend to focus on issues faced by urban youth, thus excluding understandings of rural, Indigenous, and Afro-Peruvian youth. With the aim of offering a more comprehensive – though not exhaustive – reading of youth in Peru, in this chapter we explore education and development issues concerning both urban and rural youth who also move between urban and rural spheres of activity.

Across class and ethnic differences, Peruvian youth from different sectors have been characterized by a deep sense of social sensibility and a willingness to help (Morales, personal interview, June 11, 2016). Many youth in urban areas volunteer in temporary or sometimes lengthy locally organized activities that serve from environmental to social goals in their neighborhoods or other areas. In rural areas where youth fully engage in economic activities of subsistence, from farming to tourism, as active members of their communities, youth hold a deep sense of identity that is connected spiritually and through an ecological sense of belonging to their community, while they also are able to look critically at the struggle to maintain their language, culture and way of life within a society which has marginalized them (Sumida Huaman, 2015).

Initiatives for youth education and development in Peru have been primarily conceptualized within national plans to end poverty and to foster Peru's social and economic advancement in ways that are aligned with the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. In this context, youth are conceptualized not as a solitary group but as part of an overarching vulnerable population that includes children, women, and those living in poverty. Over the past

20 years in Peru, governmental and non-governmental organizations have led the implementation of National Plans of Action for Childhood and Adolescence (Planes Nacionales de Acción por la Infancia y la Adolescencia, PNAIA, 2012-2021) which aim at working in coordination with other governmental policies. The primary objectives of these plans are to serve children and women as the primary vulnerable populations, without solely focusing on youth.

Notwithstanding, for adolescent populations these plans have objectives to define and target the following problems: adolescent pregnancy rates, quality of secondary education, participation space to promote their rights and development (Morales, personal interview, June 11, 2016).

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section discusses the common opportunity structures available to youth in the country. Using quantitative data that represent educational and economic opportunities for Peruvian youth, this section provides a broad, contextual overview of the extent to which youth participate in education and the labor market. In the second section we discuss challenges faced by Peruvian youth, focusing on three main challenges that are consistently identified as central to education and development issues. For each theme, we elaborate on efforts taken by governmental and non-governmental organizations to address these challenges. The third section is devoted to two key government-led initiatives that focus on youth access to education and economic development: ProJoven and Beca 18. In light of the issues examined in the chapter, in the final section we consider the implications for education and initiatives concerning youth development in Peru.

Common Opportunity Structures for Peruvian Youth

Peru has experienced relative economic success in the region of Latin America. In the last ten years the Peruvian economy rose by an average of 6.4% per year, making it the second-fastest growth performance in the region. During this same period, Peru doubled its per capita

income and almost a quarter of its population has escaped poverty (World Bank Report, 2015). Despite these impressive gains at the national level, economic opportunities have not been spread evenly among the Peruvian people, and youth, in particular, continue to experience high rates of unemployment and minimal access to higher education and quality jobs. Previous reports have indicated similar problems (UNESCO 2010).

Peru has made important progress in making primary education accessible as reflected in the mean level of schooling (9.7 years) for young people aged 15-29 (Giugale et al., 2007). However, this expansion of basic education has also been coupled with a deterioration of educational quality and standards, particularly for youth from rural and indigenous communities. Hence, while there has been a notable increase in the coverage of basic education, “For most youth, basic education and completion of secondary school determines their future level of income, productivity, and job opportunities. Education is deficient, particularly in public schools where the poorest students attend” (Giugale, 2007, p. 596). The reality is that educational quality is largely beyond the reach of youth in living in poverty and in rural and indigenous communities.

Peru’s educational system faces a multitude of problems including poor quality instruction, a lack of equity, weak administration, insufficient funding and resources, and inadequate infrastructure. Mistreatment of students by teachers is often found in rural classrooms, in which students often are physically and emotionally intimidated. These practices, coupled with a curriculum that does not adapt itself to the multilingual and multicultural realities of rural Peru, result in low student engagement and participation (Alvarado, 2010).

Given the low quality of education in Peru, many youth from low-income families choose to leave school in order to work and contribute to their family’s income. In addition, many youth

abandon school because they do not perceive it to be relevant to their lives or because they are being mistreated and discriminated against (Bartlett et al., 2012; UNESCO, 2010). According to Giugale (2007), these phenomena account for a high secondary school drop out rate (28%) among poor Peruvian youth. Though opportunities for professional training and development through vocational and technology schools exist, these programs mainly serve youth who have completed secondary school—leaving a significant share of school dropouts unserved. A 2011 report published by the Peruvian Ministry of Labor and Employment cites that 70% of young people do not have technical or professional education (Córdova, 2011). This has a significant impact on their income level and ability to invest in their personal and professional development. It must also be noted that young people in rural areas have even less access to education and employment and are more likely to live in poverty. In rural areas, 43% of youth aged 16 to 29 have reached the level of primary education, 45% have finished high school, and only 2.9% have completed college-level studies (Córdova, 2011).

Research suggests that the quality of secondary and university training in Peru is varied and multifarious. Both the basic and post-secondary education systems are characterized by fragmentation and uneven access to opportunities to develop useful technical and general skills (Córdova, 2011). In addition, according to Córdova, a perception exists that many youth pursue dead-end professions and develop skills for careers that offer few viable opportunities.

Of the economic opportunities that are available to youth in Peru, most are in the informal economy. Peru is characterized by higher rates of informal economic activity as compared to other countries in Latin America (Córdova, 2011). According to Diaz and Rosas (2016), approximately 9% of Peruvian youth ages 15 to 24 are unemployed, and 80% of those who are employed have informal market jobs. Informal market jobs are more prevalent in urban

areas and are occupied by youth and older workers disproportionately. In addition, there are prevailing gender wage gaps indicating that young women, though participating at higher rates in the Peruvian economy, continue to earn much less than their male counterparts. According to Ñopo et al. (2008), this is particularly the case for low-income women, whose hourly wages are half that of men.

Nothing speaks more to the detachment of Peruvian youth from education and the labor market than the emergence of the “*nini*” phenomenon. The term “*nini*” arises from the Spanish terms for “*ni estudian*” (do not attend school), and “*ni trabajan*” (do not work).” It is estimated that 20 million youth ages 15-24 years across Latin American are out of school and not working. In 2012, *ninis* accounted for 19.5% of the youth population in Peru. Recent reports place the number of this vulnerable group of young people, who do not have access to education or work, at about 1.3 million or closer to 20% of the youth population (IEDEP, 2015). Though a possible assumption of *ninis* can be that they come from higher class families who can afford to be out of school and out of work, studies have shown that they are concentrated in less educated and poorer households (IEDEP, 2015). In terms of gender, the majority of *ninis* in Peru are female. However, the percentage of females who are a part of this subgroup of youth has decreased from 61.5% in 2009 to 57.6% in 2015. A possible explanation for this decline can be that young women are experiencing increased access to educational and economic opportunities. In addition, studies have demonstrated a correlation between an increase in the number of male *ninis* and violence in high-crime settings (de Hoyos et al., 2015). This highlights the complex social and economic causes and consequences of the *nini* phenomenon. As de Hoyos and colleagues (2015) state:

For most youth, these years of the life cycle are characterized by change and vulnerability, by the development of self-esteem and sense of belonging, by a need for support from health services, specialized supervision, and specialized orientation, and by exposure to risks. Youth who are divorced from the education system and the workforce in these years may find it particularly hard to fulfill their potential. (p.4)

As is evident in the research literature reviewed in this section on youth participation in the Peruvian economy, the educational and economic opportunities that exist for Peruvian youth are stratified along gender, class, rural/urban, and racial lines. Much is lost in attempting to understand youth's experiences by strictly looking at national-level data such as education completion and unemployment rates. Though these numbers do paint a broad picture, it is also important to interrogate what the numbers do not show and whom they fail to include. In the section that follows, we examine the risks faced by Peruvian youth—with particular attention to how poverty and violence affect their lives and life trajectories.

Risks and Changes in the Cycle of Poverty and Violence

Poverty, social exclusion, racism, and gender discrimination greatly impact the lives of Peruvian youth (Bartlett et al., 2012; Experiencias Participativas, 2006; Suárez 2013b). Urban youth living in poverty and rural youth, who comprise the majority of youth living in poverty, and who are characteristically of Indigenous and Afro-Peruvian descent, relate to experiences of racial and social exclusion. When examining this trend in previous studies, we find similar outcomes concerning experiences of racism and exclusion in urban contexts. A survey distributed among 320 high school and university students in Lima, the capital of Peru, revealed that 50.4% of respondents had experienced discrimination including being yelled at via racial

slurs in the street. The responses from students identified as white, indicated that they were less likely to experience exclusionary attitudes from others (Drzewieniecki, 2004).

As previously mentioned, over a million Peruvian youth between the ages of 15 to 24 years old do not study or work and are referred to as *ninis*, (not studying and not working). The *ninis* often come from marginalized sectors and are considered vulnerable to social problems associated to delinquency – including gang related activity – and substance abuse (IEDEP-CCL, 2015; Munyo, 2013). The National Commission for the Development of Life without Drugs (2002) has raised awareness about the trend of earlier drug use among Peruvian youth. The consumption of alcohol and tobacco are highest in adolescents between the ages of 12 and 19, while youth between 17 and 19 years of age constitute the main consumers of cocaine (La Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo y Vida sin Drogas – DEVIDA, 2002).

Beyond Gangs and Substance Abuse

The report *Experiencias Participativas* (2006) points to Peruvian youth's disconnection from family as the main factor for their involvement in gang-related activity. More recent studies that look at gang membership among youth stress the lack of a sense of belonging as a main reason for youth to become gang members. For many of these urban youth, the gang replaces family relationships (*Experiencias Participativas*, 2006; Ministerio de Justicia y Derechos Humanos, 2013). Police reports in the year 2000 identified close to 400 gangs and over twelve thousand gang members in the metropolitan area of the Lima. Among those who were underage, 53% were between the ages of 12 and 17. Gang-related activities in urban sectors take place in the environment of the neighborhood (79.8%), the school (10.9%), and at sports events, particularly soccer matches through the so-called called *Barra bravas* or soccer enthusiasts

(9.3%); a number of the barra bravas have been characterized by violence and vandalism over the past two decades (DIPARCI, 2004, p. 5).

Youth violence typically has been addressed by the Peruvian government through the use of repressive policies and/or military force. Institutions tend to approach youth as criminals rather than focusing their efforts on creating programs to prevent violence and support youth development and wellbeing. Fortunately, due in part to efforts to justify economic agendas (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2011), there is an emerging urgency to change public opinion that characterizes and essentializes youth as an at-risk population (Bartlett et al., 2012) – as a group prone to violence, drug consumption, and delinquency. The hope is that such urgency will yield more critical and complex conceptualizations of youth, thereby advancing a fuller understanding of young people as a group with rights, resources, and voice. Viewing youth as a key population sector that can contribute to societal wellbeing will help generate policy and interventions to appropriately address their needs and serve their individual and collective interests.

Alternative Perspectives on Peruvian Youth

When assessing the situation of particularly vulnerable youth, it is critical to understand their experiences beyond the risks and problems commonly portrayed in economic reports and the media in order to resist deficit orientations. Ames and colleagues (2009) emphasize the necessity of inquiry approaches that are responsive to the developmental, social, and cultural characteristics of children and youth. Such approaches, particularly in-depth qualitative research, can help advance knowledge and inform institutional initiatives concerned with the wellbeing and development of young people. For example, in our work we commonly find that youth who live in poverty present economic struggles and family conflict as main challenges impacting their

view of themselves and their ideas about their future, including work opportunities and educational attainment. Such youth, of course, are not inherently dysfunctional; they are, rather, trapped in highly challenging situations that require deeper understanding and more realistic forms of support. Similarly, in a survey of 402 children between 11-17 years of age, 42.9% indicated that not being loved by their parents was enough reason to commit suicide, while break ups in romantic relationships constituted 11.1% of such reasons (Bonfim, 2004, cited in MINSA, 2004). The young people participating in this study are struggling due to relational tensions; they need thoughtful support to work through these potentially life-threatening difficulties.

Schools tend to be conceptualized and identified as structural agents that foster child and youth development; however, schools characterized by a hierarchical structure can also constitute sites of social violence that may include bullying and different forms of physical and emotional intimidation, as shown in a study of rural Indigenous girls who experienced intimidation in their classroom (Alvarado, 2010). A study by Ragúz (2002) on sexual and reproductive health among Peruvian youth in urban and rural sectors found that violence at home is common as female youth are often subjected to sexual abuse while male youth tend to be the main victim of physical violence. In summary, Peruvian youth, like young people everywhere, struggle in the face of multiple contextual difficulties. Until we pursue changes in these contexts rather than pointing fingers at the victims, youth will remain overly pathologized. In the sections that follow we outline some of the contextual factors that place youth at risk.

Main Risk Factors Facing Peruvian Youth

While a number of public and non-governmental initiatives focus on addressing the problems of delinquency, substance abuse, and violence among youth, there are other important

conditions that youth face, not in isolation but in connection to the broader society. In this section, we present a discussion and analysis of structural factors that play a major role in determining the social, educational, and economic opportunities available to Peruvian youth. As such, we argue against the narrative that positions youth as a problem to be fixed and instead shine a light on the conditions and challenges that place youth at risk. In a recent interview, Hugo Morales Córdova, an Investigator at the Department of Psychology Research Group on Drugs, Security and Citizen Coexistence and Assistant Professor and at the Catholic University of Peru, discussed three main challenges Peruvian youth face (Morales, personal interview, June 11, 2016). The challenges he addressed are: (1) adolescent pregnancy; (2) structures for formal participation in society; and (3) access to quality education. We discuss each of these concerns in the sections that follow.

Adolescent Pregnancy

Adolescent pregnancy in Peru is high on average for the Latin American region (PNAIA, 2012-2021). Adolescents from rural areas present the highest levels of pregnancy (19.3%), particularly in the Amazonian region (26.2%) in the eastern part of the country. While teen pregnancy in urban sectors is not of general concern, recent projections point at increments in pregnancy cases for these sectors (PNAIA, 2012-2021). Overall, Peruvian adolescents are lacking information to prevent or address the consequences of sexual behavior (Flórez-Arístegui & Barreto, 2004). Many studies point to concerns about the socialization of girls and women as passive or silent participants with respect to engaging in unprotected sexual relations with male youth or men (Ragúz, 2002; PNAIA, 2012-2021).

Pregnancy among female youth commonly impacts their physical and mental health as well as their social development, which in turn impacts the health and quality of life of their offspring (Flórez-Arístegui & Barreto, 2004). Adolescent mothers from marginalized sectors become more vulnerable and prone to worsened circumstances of need and risk associated with economic and social problems such as poverty, unemployment, alcoholism, prostitution, low levels or lack of formal schooling, and overall violence (Flórez-Arístegui & Barreto, 2004). Peru has developed important policies and programs that emphasize services and protection for mothers (not only teen mothers) and their babies (e.g., the program Bienvenidos a la Vida or Welcome to Life, promoted by the Peruvian Ministry of Health). The results of campaigns and the efforts of these initiatives have been positive. However, as indicated by Morales (personal interview, June 11, 2016), although children until the age of 3 are now better supported, these initiatives do not continue to address older child and youth challenges. In Peru, although there is much more needed for children of all ages, the policy and program gaps for youth between 15 and 29 years of age is particularly large (Morales, personal interview, June 11, 2016).

Structures for Formal Participation in Society

Across different social strata, youth in Peru are characterized by a strong sense of solidarity and disposition to help (Morales, personal interview, June 11, 2016). Most Peruvian youth, however, lack formal structures for civic participation. In this context, Morales identifies the absence of such participation as another challenge facing Peruvian youth. Particularly among youth from marginalized sectors, their socialization and cultural practices throughout their early years emphasize obedience to parents and adults. As a result, many such youth lack the necessary self-esteem to become proactive in decisions that can result in profound consequences,

such as consenting to sexual relations and getting pregnant, in the case of female youth. In turn, many male youth in these sectors are socialized in practices that limit their responsibility with respect to consequences of sexual behavior. In this scenario, both female and male youth are socialized into taking passive roles in different ways. Early obedience to parents without opportunities to play an active role in society can be a recipe for such passivity.

It is interesting to note that governmental initiatives in Peru closely follow guidelines for international initiatives that promote the development and wellbeing of youth. But there are concerns, as Morales (personal interview, June 11, 2016) states, in the actual implementation of these initiatives by the Peruvian government. In practice, government initiatives intended to serve Peruvian youth have not included their full participation. Even when youth participation is one of the features in such initiatives, it has primarily consisted of inviting youth to speak during sponsored events; the results, therefore, have been of little beneficial consequence. The efforts by the government to support youth advocacy beyond the level of public discourse reveal profound limitations in its commitment to assume responsibility for effective youth-based policies and programs. In this regard, spaces like public schools unfortunately reproduce social inequalities. The education available for youth from marginalized sectors lacks quality and opportunities for the development of leadership skills and self-esteem. Conversely, youth attending private schools generally have access to an academic and social environment structured to foster learning opportunities to exercise their rights, and to facilitate their proactive participation in diverse roles including those of leadership.

Access to Quality Education

According to Morales, the third major challenge facing Peruvian youth is the low level and/or absence of formal instruction that guarantees quality education and development. Youth in Peru are in need of programs and support to prepare them to close education gaps, including access to higher education and employment opportunities that allow for their economic stability, mobility, and independence. Economic inequality already separates youth who attend higher education institutions from those who do not. A small elite sector of youth from wealthier families can access quality instruction in schools and higher education institutions. These students are granted opportunities to maximize their entrance to a prestigious university, and to build connections to social networks that are helpful for advantageous placement in the job market and in society more broadly. The majority of youth, such rural youth and those living in poverty, lack a chance to access these opportunities. Youth from these sectors who complete their secondary education most likely seek low-level, low-paid entry-level jobs. Many others remain unemployed and unable to pursue higher education.

In the next section we feature important interventions that focus on the education of Peruvian youth to promote their economic and social development. We offer a brief overview of programs and then discuss two specific initiatives: ProJoven, which was implemented between 1996 and 2010, and Beca 18, which is currently in the early stages of implementation. These initiatives focus on youth from underserved urban and rural sectors in innovative ways that acknowledge and engage their strengths and assets. We explore these initiatives through our review of various studies on the implementation and impact of ProJoven as an established intervention, and our interviews of Peruvian policy and educational experts on the current state of Beca 18 as a relatively new initiative.

Two Key Interventions for Peruvian Youth: ProJoven and Beca 18

Interventions responding to the needs of youth in Peru have followed in the direction of international and regional initiatives and, most significantly, national development plans elaborated over the last two decades. Relevant reports prepared by Peruvian governmental sectors in collaboration with non-governmental institutions evaluate the situation of Peruvian youth and the plans to support their health and development, their access to higher education, their participation in the overall society, and their insertion into a competitive job market. Global initiatives like the Millennium Development Goals lead national initiatives such as the National Poverty Relief Strategy and the Acuerdo Nacional (National Agreement) to attend to issues concerning children and youth development policies and programs in Peru. National plans and reports review a plethora of programs, some more successful than others, that work to advance youths' knowledge of their rights -- from civic rights to health and reproductive rights, and to help youth to develop skills that prepare them to perform in the formal economic sector. Several of these reports evince the need to implement initiatives that foster youth empowerment, where the initiatives articulate strategies for actively engaging youth in the efforts of the initiatives (Experiencias Participativas, 2006). The two initiatives discussed below approach these issues from different angles.

ProJoven

ProJoven (ProYouth) was one of Peru's most long-standing youth initiatives and was operational between 1996 and 2010, during which it impacted approximately 73,000 youth. The program was created by the Ministry of Labor and Job Promotion (MTPE) in 1996 and its main objective was to provide job training and internship opportunities to young Peruvians from low-

income households (Diaz & Rosas, 2016; Ñopo et al., 2008). Designed after the Chilean job-training program ChileJoven, ProJoven aimed to increase the employability and productivity of disadvantaged youth between the ages of 16 and 24. Between 1996 and 2004, ProJoven was financed by government funds from the Public Treasury. For the next six years of the program's implementation, it was funded through a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (Diaz & Rosas, 2016). The program spent US \$420 per beneficiary annually, with the costs covering program operation and stipends for the trainees.

The ProJoven initiative featured a mix of formal and on-the-job training with two main programmatic components: 1) 300 hours of classes at a training center for roughly 5 hours a day for 3 months; 2) placement in a paid internship experience in private manufacturing firms for an additional period of 3 months. Public and private training agencies (PPTAs) were contracted to design and provide the in-classroom training courses for program beneficiaries. These courses were designed in coordination with the companies and firms that would later host the internship experiences, and as such provided trainees with training for the relatively low-skill jobs (i.e., knitting, sales support, cooking and baking, etc.) available in marketplace. After completing the 300 hours of classroom training and instruction, program beneficiaries participated in their on-site internships at various firms. During the 3-month internships, youth received a stipend (lower than the minimum wage) and health insurance. In order to encourage more women to join the program, ProJoven provided women with children under the age of five with a double stipend.

Impact evaluations of the ProJoven initiative suggest that the initiative has had a positive, but small effect on rates of employment, generally between 3-5% (Chong et al., 2008, Ñopo et al., 2008, Diaz & Rosas, 2016). However, the program has had a more substantial impact on employment rates for young women. According to Ñopo and colleagues (2008),

“these results suggest that labor training programs that promote equal gender participation have disproportionately positive effects on outcomes for women trainees in a labor market with substantial gender differences” (p. 34). A more recent study confirmed the results of previous evaluations, and added that although ProJoven did not have a significant impact on overall employment rates, it did substantially improve the *quality* of employment secured (Diaz & Rosas, 2016). It was found that youth who participated in ProJoven had a better chance of obtaining jobs in the formal market and a better likelihood of getting a job with health insurance and/or a pension. Additionally, the percentage of youth working under permanent and temporary contracts in firms (vs. working at home or the homes of friends) increased after participation in ProJoven, indicating better working conditions for program beneficiaries. Youth who dropped out of the program did so for three main reasons: 1) urgent need to work to support their families; 2) too great of a distance between home and the training center; and 3) program subsidies were too low or were provided past the due date (Economy Report Peru, 2011).

After a change in government and discontinued financing from the IDB in 2010, ProJoven was redesigned and renamed “Jovenes a la Obra,” which means “Young People to Work.” We were not able to gather information on the newly named program for this chapter. But the general ProJoven model was driven by a human capital perspective that focused on improving the chances of disadvantaged youth to participate in the labor market through the development of their technical and vocational skills. The rationale was that these youth tended to complete their basic education without acquiring the skills and experiences necessary to obtain a formal job. As noted, the impact evaluations suggest that the ProJoven program was successful to some extent given its objectives. However, the studies of ProJoven have been mainly

quantitative analyses that do not provide a more in-depth look at the qualitative experiences, perceptions, motivations, and aspirations of program participants.

ProJoven was one of Peru's longest lasting government-run youth initiatives, and although the outcomes were mixed, it had varying degrees of positive impact in the social and economic lives of thousands of youth who were able to join the workforce. Many saw marked improvements to their livelihoods, particularly for young women. As such, ProJoven deserves attention as a model with great promise but also some key shortcomings. Diaz and Rosas (2016) note that, unlike other similar programs in the Latin American region, ProJoven's in-classroom training courses failed to address socio-emotional skills, such as cognitive and behavioral processes leading to motivation and self-esteem. We see this as a serious shortcoming, as a more holistic approach might have had an impact on their drop out rate. The program also could have been improved by: 1) offering more opportunities for participation near rural areas, 2) providing additional supports for participant families, 3) creating more efficient and predictable means of paying subsidies and stipends, and 4) developing a more targeted effort to recruit participants of Afro-Peruvian and indigenous descent.

Beca 18

Beca 18, created by the Peruvian government nearly five years ago, is a scholarship program that aims to provide opportunities for youth from underserved populations to access higher education. Without this type of support, it is highly unlikely that youth from underserved sectors will be able to do so. Beca 18 is sponsored by Pronabec, the national program of scholarships and educational loans. The recipient institutions of Beca 18 are recognized universities across the nation, many of them located in coastal cities and in Lima. During its few

years of implementation Beca 18 has served youth across the country but also those who come from specific situations, such as youth who are part of the military forces stationed in high-conflict regions; youth living in *albergues* (residences for children and youth who have been abandoned, are orphans, or come from situations of extreme poverty or risk) youth who have suffered political violence; and youth who come from Indigenous communities. At times these groups overlap, as many of the youth experiencing these specific conditions are of Indigenous and Afro-Peruvian descent. Beca 18 has significantly opened up opportunities to Indigenous youth to access higher education institutions in the capital city, which houses the most prestigious universities in the country.

Based on high school grades and performance on an online test, the best students from across the country are able to compete and access studies in private universities through this scholarship. Because Beca 18 is a relatively new program, there is no available formal research on its impact. Nonetheless there is emerging evidence from professionals who work with Beca 18 students. In this section we discuss such evidence as it relates to the particular experiences of Indigenous rural youth who come from the most vulnerable and isolated population sectors. Margarita Osterling, a higher education consultant and former program director for Beca 18, now works with Indigenous students in a highly reputable private university. She explained the affordances and challenges of institutions hosting the Beca 18 program when trying to meet the needs of Indigenous students (Osterling, Interview, June 28, 2016). Her observations are shared in the descriptions that follow.

Among those who have participated in Beca 18 there are Indigenous youth selected for the scholarship benefit who come to the Intercultural and Bilingual Education program. For many youth coming to a university in the capital city, it is their first experience leaving their

communities and being away from their families. While in general students may have relatives living in the city with whom they can stay, this is often not the case for youth coming from the most remote or isolated areas in the country. Osterling points to the lack of preparation of institutions to meet the cultural, social and psychological needs of Indigenous students. For educators supporting Beca 18 at different institutions, it has been challenging to address the adaptation of Indigenous students to their new academic and cultural environment. Osterling observed that for educators in Beca 18 this is and has been part of a slow learning process, where it is evident that it is not only students who struggle to adapt to their new environment, but that the hosting institutions too must learn to adapt in how they support a more culturally and linguistically diverse student body.

Among the challenges that university programs have encountered in supporting Beca 18 students is the lack of appropriate structures for addressing the academic development needs of these students. There is a strong correlation between Indigenous students who come from remote communities and their lack of academic preparation at the university level. Few university programs have offered tutoring and related support for new comers by hiring Indigenous mentors who could be more sensitive to such students' experiences and struggles with cultural differences. Some institutions have recruited second year and older students to help freshmen navigate their new environment. As educators in these institutions are realizing, support to Indigenous students is not strictly academic but involves encouragement and understanding from mentors and an environment that fosters community and a sense of belonging. Indigenous youth who access programs like Beca 18 can benefit from extra academic support, but they need more than that. Osterling suggests that culturally sensitive academic and social support are necessary

as Beca 18 and its higher education partners strive to enhance the opportunities for Indigenous youth and others from underrepresented sectors across Peru.

Implications

Youth in Peru have benefitted from the social and economic gains made by the country at the national level, as can be seen in the expansion of basic education and higher rates of participation in the economy. However, youth in Peru continue to face major challenges including high adolescent pregnancy rates, violence and gang-related activity, poor quality education, and a lack of access to formal economic opportunities. The “nini” phenomenon of out-of-school and out-of-work youth reflects a severe detachment for particular youth from the Peruvian education and labor systems.

An analysis of available data indicates that youth very different opportunities for actualizing their own personal and professional development. The likelihood of Peruvian youth reaching their full potential decreases substantially if they are poor, female, or of Indigenous or Afro-Peruvian descent. The prevailing discourses conceptualize Peruvian youth as at-risk, deviant and deficient, rather than seeing them as important community and national resources.

The Peruvian government has made concerted efforts over the past two decades to invest in its youth through the national programs of ProJoven and Beca 18. These programs have shown the potential for a large-scale and important impact, with ProJoven yielding particularly strong outcomes related to adolescent and young woman participation in the labor force. Although these programs have been studied with traditional quantitative metrics, there is a lack of in-depth qualitative research that could potentially provide insights on the socio-emotional and psychological dimensions of these efforts. We recommend an increased focus on in this kind of evaluation, so that we better understand the diverse subjectivities – or differing experiences -- of

Peruvian youth. Such work would help policymakers and civil society draw on the creativity, energy, and vision of the country's young people.

Several of the programs for youth development we reviewed for this chapter are dedicated to address diverse challenges, among them adolescent pregnancy, substance abuse, violence, and lack of formal (quality) preparation to participate effectively in society. Most reviews of these programs emphasize youth participation as key for their success. While more data may be required to contribute to the understanding of youth participation and how it takes place, one of the main findings in this chapter is that there is a need for formal participation structures for youth that policy and programs have yet to address. Beyond advocating for education and development, pro-youth initiatives must shift their conceptualization of youth from an at-risk group to a productive untapped resource whose roles go beyond adapting to society and institutions to working with adults to enhance Peruvian society and its place in the world.

As shown through our review of ProJoven and Beca 18, providing opportunities for the education and development of Peruvian youth implies more than providing better access to academic and formal instruction. Such opportunities, when designed with cultural sensitivity, can incorporate the diverse resources students bring from all their richly varied backgrounds to the spaces where they study and participate. As institutions rethink and revise their approaches to education and youth development in this manner, Peru's young people and the country as a whole will be much better positioned to actualize their enormous potential.

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