

Measuring Performance of Innovative Educational Programs: Developing Critical Learning Skills in Street Children Through Dance

Research Summary by:

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Who We Are

MindLeaps is a humanitarian organization that serves out-of-school adolescents in post-conflict and developing countries. The core of our work is a bridge program that attracts adolescents off the streets through dance classes that target critical learning skills to prepare them for entry into schools or vocational training centers.

What We Found

Preliminary findings by Carnegie Mellon University Rwanda concluded the MindLeaps' program improved the composite skill levels of 45 youth between the ages of 9 and 18 years in Rwanda.

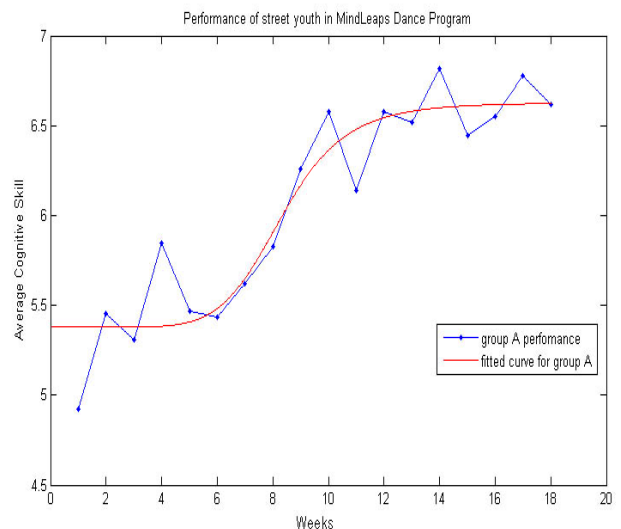
How We Did It

MindLeaps' standardized dance curriculum focuses on cognitive skills that we determined were critical to future school success. The program develops adolescents' ability to concentrate, memorize, and use language, while helping them learn to work as a team, become self-disciplined and develop their creativity and self-esteem.

A team of Carnegie Mellon University students and faculty developed software that allows us to capture daily data on these skills. The software generates skill development curves that visualize the progress of individual students and entire groups.

Each student in the study had a minimum of 504 data points, and each class/group had over 7,500 combined data points. Students were assessed over a six-month period.

What We Learned



- A general S-Curve is formed: students show a rapid improvement in cognitive and non-cognitive skills in 7 – 10 weeks and then maintain their newly attained level
- All three groups improved their composite skill score
- The group of younger children (ages 10 -12 years) improved more than either the mixed age group or the older group

What Questions Were Raised

Further research needs to be done with larger samples and accounting for other factors, such as access to food, duration of time lived on the street, and addictions.

Where We Are Going

MindLeaps is now working on a study with Drexel University to expand the study to 75 adolescents. We are also interested in collaborating with other organizations in Rwanda to expand our program and analysis.