

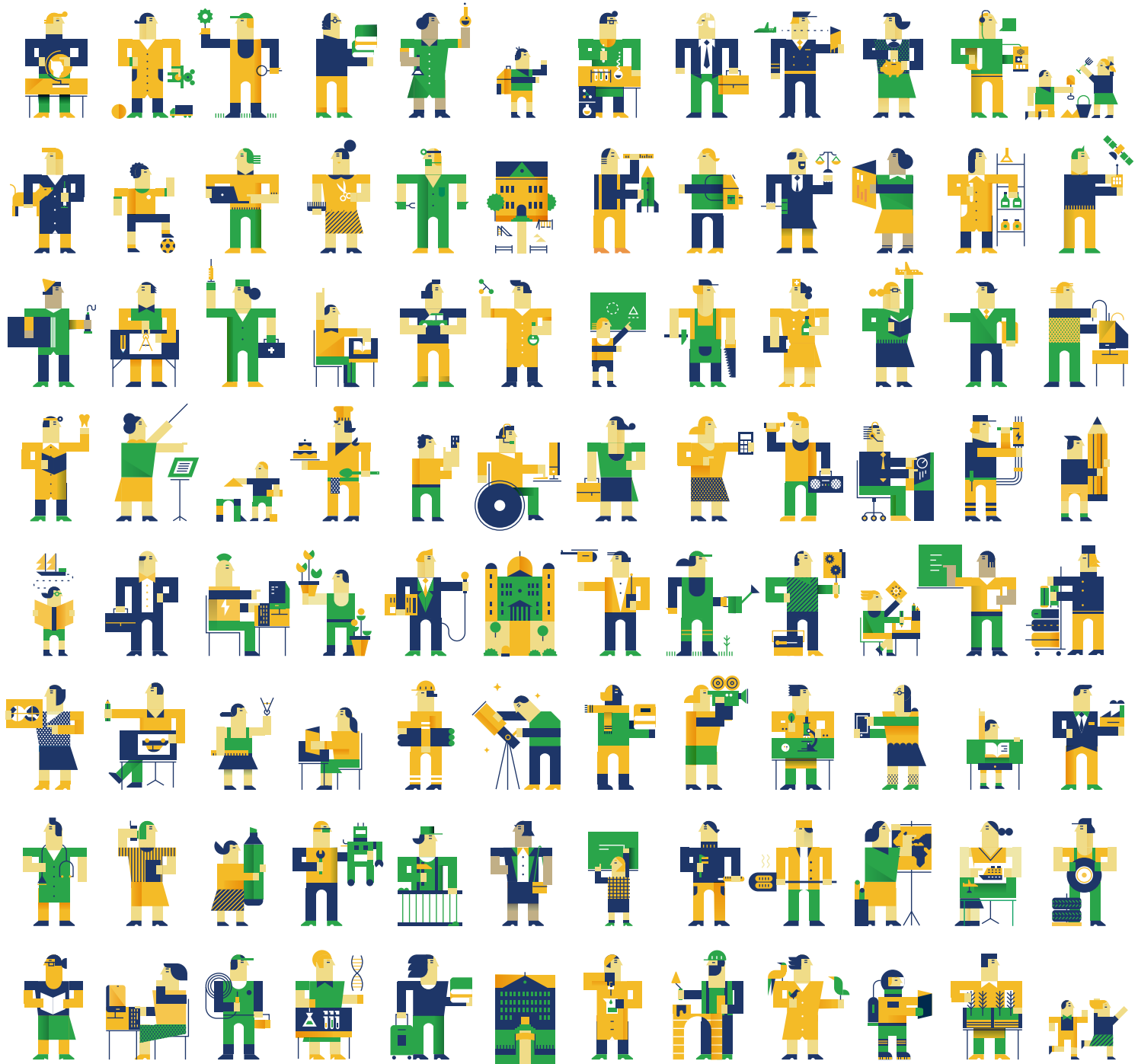
Education in Brazil

Laying the foundations for change

As the Dilma administration strives to fuel innovation and growth in the Brazilian economy, the issue of access to quality education is taking centre stage. With a new national plan to boost education expenditure to 10 percent of GDP and a renewed focus by Brazilian academic institutions on collaboration with industry and technology creation, Brazil's education sector looks set to make an important contribution to the nation's future

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1. Students at private university Estacio
2. SENAI provides formal training for specialised workers for industry
3. Higher education has become key for young Brazilians
4. SESC provides education that would otherwise be unavailable for millions of Brazilians
5. The Ayrton Senna Institute creates opportunities for young people | Photo: Rodrigo Camara
6. The futuristic Etec Heliopolis in Sao Paulo

Time for an education revolution

OVERVIEW Successive governments have failed to address Brazil's most urgent structural needs. Today, as this young democracy finds its voice, the government is being forced to listen and take action. With the better life Brazilians seek dependent on better education for all, does the country have what it takes to build a better future?

Brazil is shifting awkwardly in the glare of international scrutiny. Where once the government was able to deflect or divert unwanted attention, running from the demands of a challenging reality is no longer an option and popular protests have become commonplace. In response to this, President Dilma Rousseff's second term in office began with a new-look cabinet and the admission that difficult times were ahead, questions would be asked and sacrifices would have to be made if the country was to get back on track. This was an honest self-assessment from a president who had inherited enviable approval ratings from her predecessor Luiz Inacio 'Lula' da Silva, only to see them gradually diminished to a narrow election victory last year. The glow of a vigorous economy has similarly dimmed in recent years as evidence

piled up of an unsustainable, heavily subsidised boom that masked the country's underlying problems. The headlines haven't all been bad. Education was at last placed on top of the agenda during the election campaign, with a promise to include another 12 million children during the election campaign. A far-reaching plan was unveiled that aims to rebuild the country's education system, promising to

include another 12 million children currently outside of the school system over the next four years. Meanwhile, unemployment fell to a record low of 4.3 percent in December 2014, although productivity is also falling after a meagre 13 percent improvement over the last decade. Ranked 126th out of 183 countries for ease of doing business, Brazil's competitive edge remains severely blunted by bureaucracy. "The World Bank highlighted Brazil as one of the worst countries to do business in, but we are making some dramatic changes", said small business secretary Guilherme Afif Domingos. "We are going to jump from the Middle Ages straight to the digital era." The urgency to make that jump lies in a worrying skills gap pointing to critical shortcomings in the education sector. According to a

survey by global employment agency Manpower, 68 percent of employers in Brazil have experienced difficulty in recruiting the right workforce. While ministers promise to bring the time it takes to open a company down from 150 days to just five, recruiting sufficiently skilled labour is the next hurdle. Historically speaking, when a game-changing solution has been required, Brazilian creativity has shone through. In adapting sugar cane, cattle or the humble soybean to the tropical environment, or developing the means to drill for oil deeper and further offshore than ever before, the country has grown to become a world leader in research and production. The next stage is to go beyond self-sufficiency to adding value at home before selling to the international market. "Maybe Brazil's problem isn't creating entrepreneurs but rather turning innovative ideas into solid technology within a system that is outdated", points out Bernardo Gradim, CEO of the country's pioneering ethanol company GranBio. Already the seventh-largest economy in the world, Brazil has the ingredients to become a fer-

tile ground in which entrepreneurialism, for so long stymied by introverted and protectionist administrations, can flourish, both within and beyond its borders. Today, the country is starting to make deep, far-reaching changes to its saturated consumption-based model in order to progress and fulfil its potential as a global economic force. Brazil's dream of becoming the much-vaunted centre of innovation and technology in the southern hemisphere finally looks within reach. To achieve that dream, however, the education sector needs solutions on a continental scale that successive administrations have failed to deliver. With state investment promising to reach 10 percent of GDP by 2023, the funds are finally available to extend the reach of education, narrow the inequality gap and shape the next generation of Brazil's citizens and entrepreneurs.

+ VIEWPOINT

"Freedom and social democracy were not enough any more. The people needed efficiency too, not only in public services, but also in politics."

Michel Temer
Vice-president of Brazil



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Preparing for success
Brazil's workforce is fundamental to its companies' drive for competitiveness, but a culture of undervaluing staff has plagued big companies for decades. The resulting high turnover has had a drastic impact on efficiency and productivity. Multinationals

report having to spend up to 40 percent more on HR in Brazil, while the retail sector experiences turnover rates of up to 56 percent. One company, however, is bucking the trend. Grupo Pao de Acucar is the retail group behind some of the country's biggest

high street stores. Strong company values and investment in the training and education of their 160,000 employees has paid dividends. Staff turnover is down to 36.5 percent, paving the way for the rest of the sector to follow.

Productivity in focus

The Brazilian government has been spurred into action as the country's educational performance impacts on its productivity. Over the last decade, workers' productivity in the country

has increased by just 13 percent, compared to 134 percent in China. Whilst the Chinese case might be considered unusual, comparisons with the likes of Chile and Mexico

are only slightly kinder. The average 15-year-old Brazilian student has the equivalent scientific and maths knowledge of a 14-year-old from their Latin American neighbours, an

average 12-year-old American or an average 10-year-old Chinese child. "Functional illiteracy has not dropped in the last ten years", notes Denis Mizne, CEO of Lemann

Foundation. "It should have naturally improved, but it hasn't." Turning around decades of poor basic and high-school education will not be easy, but the enormous scope of

the government's National Education Plan includes better preparing students for university, and giving them the right tools for the demands of the job market.



Centro Paula Souza, Sao Paulo | Photo: Gastao Guedes

A plan for change

After three-and-a-half years of debate and conjecture in Congress, Brazil's national education plan (PNE) was finally passed into law in July 2014. Its scope is vast, setting 20 targets covering all aspects from pre-school to professional training within a ten-year timeframe, and no fewer than 253 strategies by which to achieve them. Its key proposals include:

INVESTMENT

Federal spending on education is to increase from 5.6 percent of GDP to at least 7 percent by the fifth year of the plan and 10 percent by 2023. The difference will be funded by profits from Brazil's pre-salt oil exploration, but the challenge is spending the money efficiently, something not usually associated with the public sector.

ACCESS

All children aged four to five will be guaranteed a place in school by 2016, and half of those up to the age of three will be able to attend a public crèche by 2020. The plan will also increase assistance for those with special needs to achieve universal access via improved facilities and training.

LITERACY

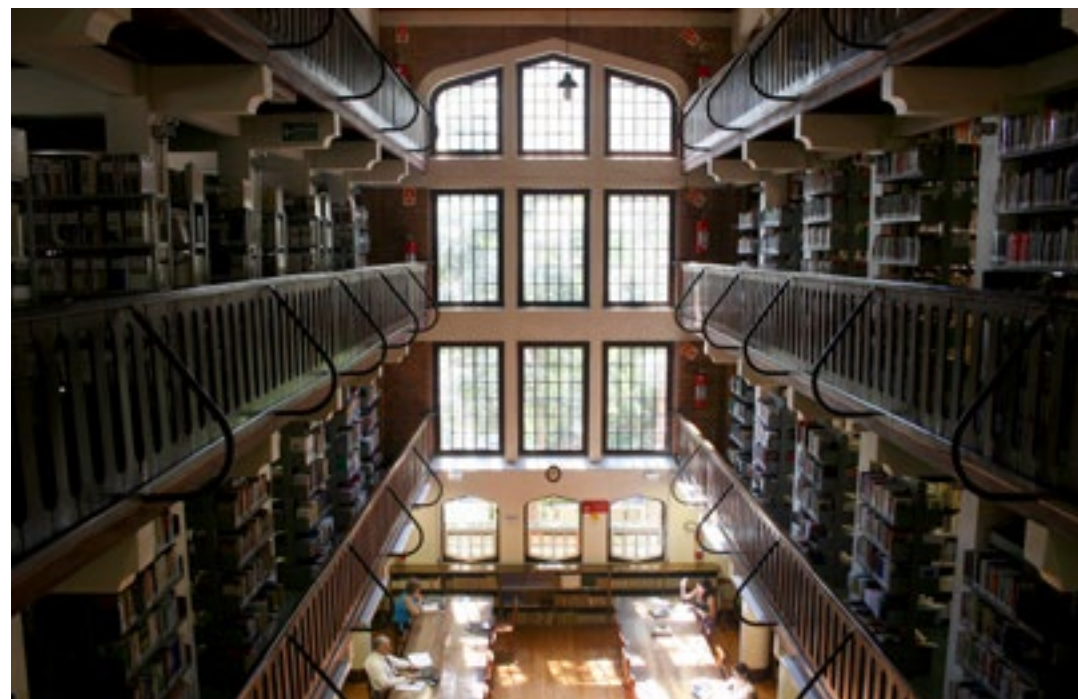
The plan aims to ensure that all children will be able to read and write by the third year of secondary school, and to eradicate illiteracy in those aged 15-plus by 2020. It will also reduce functional illiteracy by 50 percent. UNESCO research shows Brazil has the eighth highest level of adult illiteracy in the world.

TEACHERS

The plan will create a national policy for the continued training of teachers and education professionals and will ensure that, by the tenth year, 50 percent of teachers working in primary education will have completed a graduate course in their specialist field. It also aims to increase the average teaching wage to the same level as professionals of a similar level of training.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The PNE will seek to enrol 50 percent of 18 to 24-year-olds into higher education and increase those into public universities by at least 40 percent, whilst also ensuring 75 percent of lecturers have a master's degree and 35 percent possess a doctorate.



Mackenzie Presbyterian University library

Education becomes a priority for Brazil

POLICY Education is at the top of the government's agenda with to a ten-year plan to tackle the blight of low-quality teaching, high drop-out rates and functional illiteracy that has plagued the Brazilian system

The Brazilian education sector stands at an important crossroads. For decades regarded as a privilege rather than a right, the recent universalisation of access to basic schooling has been a trying, but largely successful, process. The challenge that the country faces today is ensuring that the quality of education its 40 million children receive from the public school system befits the world's seventh-largest economy.

On the surface, the system's structure is familiar. From the age of six to fourteen, children receive compulsory primary education, moving on to non-compulsory secondary education from fifteen to seventeen. At age eighteen, students can enter higher education. Unlike in the UK and the US, the most highly-regarded universities are public, their tuition entirely free, but access to them is extremely competitive.

It is an awkward paradox that while the Brazilian elite prefer to send their children to expensive private schools, it is to these free universities that the best students invariably go on to apply. Priced out of a good basic education, the majority of Brazilians are then tested out of the best universities, paying instead to attend private institutions with mixed reputations. But higher education remains in its infancy: USP, Brazil's oldest university, was

only founded in 1934. Since the 1950s, Capes, the federal agency for the support and evaluation of higher education, has been responsible for the sector's rapid growth.

The government's national education plan (PNE) set a target of 98 percent inclusion in schools by 2023. To stay on course, however, 2.9 million children need to be incorporated into the system this

"We have been evaluating graduate courses since 1974 – even the British system was only implemented in the 1990s."

Jorge Guimaraes
President of Capes

year alone and the process of universalisation has taken its toll on Brazil's public schools. In order for the plan to succeed, President Rousseff admits it must "converge the efforts of all areas of govern-

ment", or an already stretched education system will be pushed to its limits.

The teaching profession in Brazil has long been undervalued. Without the resources to cope with full-time students, children only attend classes in the mornings or afternoons. The knock-on effects for teaching efficiency are striking, and it is here that the PNE is hoped to make a major impact. Efforts at lowering drop-out rates, improving teacher training and management and expanding higher education all come backed by a major boost in investment between now and 2023, using money from the pre-salt oil exploration programme.

In a country the size of Brazil, with a population of over 200 million spread over 8.5 million kilometres, finding a solution for the needs of those both in the urban centres and in the remote, rural districts represents an enormous challenge.

There is no national curriculum and Sao Paulo is the only state to have implemented a single curriculum across all of its schools. As such, it is difficult to evaluate students and teachers, and continuity in teaching is a challenge. Without the economies of scale offered by a single, countrywide system, the cost of books, materials and technology is also

greater than it could be.

Having fallen behind neighbouring countries like Argentina and Chile in the last century, there is now a great deal to catch up on if the country is to meet 21st century demands, too. Soft skills, citizenship and the basic tenets of punctuality and collaboration all have to be bolted on to the fundamental elements of reading and writing. Functional illiteracy is the frighteningly common

"With international research, you don't add but you multiply"

Hernan Chaimovich
President of CNPq

ailment affecting somewhere between 18-27 percent of Brazilians, and, while the blame for a widening skills gap is regularly passed from the private sector to the universities and all the way down to basic education, it remains an issue that successive administrations have failed to address. In light of the national education plan, it is a problem that, if handled correctly and efficiently, can also bring enormous opportunities.

BILATERAL RELATIONS

A research partner for the UK



Glaucius Oliva, former president of CNPq, Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne and Jorge Guimaraes, president of Capes at the launch of the £375m Newton Fund

The UK has overlooked Brazil for decades, but is once again realising the country's potential not just as a market for its goods and services, but as a research partner. A new initiative launched last year looks to strengthen the scientific bond between the two nations

A DIPLOMAT'S VIEW



Alex Ellis
UK Ambassador to Brazil

Where do you see opportunities for collaboration between the two countries?

Brazil has extraordinary opportunities. It also has some big bottlenecks, and I think the UK is a country which can help unblock them, particularly around technology and infrastructure. We see that already in oil and gas.

What is the current mood among investors towards Brazil?

I think that there are fashions to these things. You have to separate the stock and the flow. The flow is

going to some other countries but the stock of Brazil is enormous and therefore the opportunities are huge. The British firms who stick at it do very well here.

What collaborations do you see in the education sector?

Under the government's new Newton Fund, there are post-docs doing joint research with the UK and Brazil. Statistics show that there is an enormous amplification effect for Brazilians who joint publish with a British researcher, more so than with any other nationality.



Photo: Eduardo Cesar

VIEWPOINT

Celso Lafer
President of FAPESP

The Sao Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP) puts research into practice, acting as a business incubator and helping the state strengthen its position as an important global hub for science, technology and innovation.

"Half of the knowledge produced by Brazil is generated here in Sao Paulo because the state has such a dense research infrastructure: the three state universities (USP, UNESP and Unicamp), Unifesp, PUC and ITA. Fapesp also has a very strong relationship with the UK, including research councils with Imperial College, Birmingham University and several others."