ADVOCACY FOR EDUCATION
POLICY REFORM
METHODS AND LESSONS
FROM A BRAZILIAN
EXPERIENCE

SOUTH-SOUTH PROGRAM
CENTRO LEMANN
SEPTEMBER/2022
OUR AGENDA TODAY

9.40am – 9.55am
Part 1: About Todos Pela Educação
- Presentation

9.55am – 11.25am
Part 2: Lessons learned from our experience
- Group activity and discussion
(10min break @ 10.25am)

11.25pm – 12.30pm
Parte 3: Educação Já
- Presentation + Group activity and discussion
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TODOS PELA EDUCAÇÃO / “ALL FOR EDUCATION”

• Founded in 2006 by a group of civil society leaders (from different sectors), with the sole mission of advocating for the improvement of the quality of Brazil’s basic education

• Context
  • After new Federal Constitution in 1988, new chapter for basic education was inaugurated; but...
    • Basic education (k-12) still with timid presence in the public debate;
    • Media coverage: low quantity and low quality;
    • Educational policy improvement at a very slow rate;
    • Very little sense of urgency for basic education reform amongst Brazil’s elite.

• Two specific objectives
  ➔ Create a strong sense of urgency for the political prioritization of basic education;
  ➔ Influence the direction of public policy at the national level.
HOW WE OPERATE

• **Education in the public debate**
  (“Communication Agency”)

• **Applied knowledge production**
  (“Think Tank”)

• **Direct articulation with decision-makers**
  (“Lobby”)

• **Public monitoring**
  (“Watch Dog”)

RESULTS

Several major policies that Todos Pela Educação advocated for have been enacted over the last few years:

✓ **2009**: Constitutional Amendment 59 – mandatory school for kids age 4 to 17 (before that: 6-14)
✓ **2012**: National Literacy Assessment
✓ **2014**: National Educational Plan Law
✓ **2018**: National Common Core* / High School Reform
✓ **2019**: New Curriculum for Initial Teacher Training
✓ **2020**: Constitutional Amendment 108 – New Fundeb (financing mechanism)
  o **2022**: National System of Governance Law (final stages)

*Advocacy effort led by Movimento Pela Base
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SESSION BREAKDOWN

Lessons learned from our experience (90 minutes)

→ Six groups of up to 8 people
→ Three “cases”

I. Group discussion over key-question – 25min
Groups 1-2: Case A
Groups 3-4: Case B
Groups 5-6: Case C

II. Case A
Groups 1-2 share (3min each), lessons learned by Todos Pela Educação (5min) and discussion (5min) – 15min total

III. Case B
Groups 3-4 share (3min each), lessons learned by Todos Pela Educação (5min) and discussion (5min) - 15min total

IV. Case C
Groups 5-6 share (3min each), lessons learned by Todos Pela Educação (5min) and discussion (5min) - 15min total
CASE A. “WE NEED YOUR HELP”

CASE B. “A COMPLETE DISASTER”

CASE C. “YOU DON’T FOOL ME”
CASE A – “WE NEED YOUR HELP”

It’s January 2015. General elections held in October 2014 are over and the newly-elected governors from all parts of Brazil have just taken office.

Governor Edson Camargo (fictitious name), a young and energetic politician from the state of Marajá (fictitious), one of the biggest states in the country, calls the executive-president of Todos Pela Educação, Priscila Cruz, and asks for a meeting: “Priscila, I am highly committed to make education my top priority, can we talk more?”

Priscila and three other collaborators from the Todos Pela Educação team pack their bags and head to to Marajá. The meeting starts promptly at 9am, and in addition to the governor, the vice-governor and the new Secretary of Education are there. After a warm welcome, Governor Camargo goes straight to the point: “Priscila, as I said in the phone, I want to transform Marajá’s education. This is for real, and I am willing to burn political capital to do what needs to be done. But I need help. I have already told my team that you guys have produced a lot of knowledge but what we really need is support in the formulation and implementation process. If you guys can be here with us, side-by-side, for the first 4-6 months, it would be wonderful. Can I count on you guys?”

Key-question: as an advocacy organization, with the sole mission of transforming the quality of Brazil’s education, what would you have done?
SHARING

GROUPS 1-2
3min each
WHAT DID WE DO / LESSONS LEARNED

• Independence is a central component of an effective advocacy effort
  • You gotta be able to criticize, you gotta be able to compliment;
  • That way you cannot be the co-author of public policy;

• Lesson learned
  • There is “trap”: well-intended government that asks for help.

• What we did in the recent past
  • In 2016, we drew a clear line – we can “transfer” knowledge, but as soon as you we are asked to help the implementation process, it is time to leave;
LESSON LEARNED: DON’T BECOME GOVERNMENT’S PARTNER

**YES**

Presenting (and discussing) our proposals

**NO**

Working side-by-side
But if government’s institutional capacity is low, how is our theory of change sustained?

Starting 2018 we decided to build a coalition of organizations (that do that kind of work) considering our advocacy agenda (Educação Já).
CASE B – “A COMPLETE DISASTER”

August 2018. Brazil has just entered a highly frictious presidential campaign cycle and a “reformist climate” has taken over the public debate. Events with Brazil’s main opinion leaders have never been so forward-looking and the media is intensily covering the main problems and challenges that the country faces.

The day of the first televised debate with presidential candidates arrives. Five candidates have a good chance of becoming Brazil’s next leader and there is great antecipation on how they will perform. The first round starts and the first theme is drawn: education.

Candidate Jair Bolsonaro, a career politician running under an agressive and anti-establishment plataform, is the first one to provide his comments on the topic. Polls show Bolsonaro sitting second in the race, with close to 20% of voting intentions, and thus far had not said much about his views on education.

Bolsonaro assertively says: “Education in Brazil, well, it’s a complete disaster! Look at the numbers: 50% of kids are illiterate by the age of 10! Everything we have done in the past 30 years is wrong. Everybody knows this. My proposal is to revolutionize education, and that means starting from scratch!”
One week later, Rogério Rondon (fictitious), one of Brazil’s most influential economists, writes a strong op-ed in one of the most famous newspapers in the country titled “The big fail: why it’s time to rethink everything in Education”. In the article, the economist cites several data systematized by Todos Pela Educação and calls for the “need of a courageous effort by Brazil’s next government to truly innovate and think outside the box, because when it comes to good ideas to improve education, Brazil is a desert”. Rondon’s main proposals: vouchers, charter schools, bonus for teachers and technology.

Towards the end of that same month of August, a potential donor that had showed interest in supporting Todos Pela Educação calls for a meeting and promptly says: “Priscila (executive-president of Todos), you know that I don’t like this Bolsonaro candidacy, but I’m afraid that what he said in the debate earlier this month is right. I am really impressed by your work but I just don’t see this ‘education thing’ happening. Did you read Rogério Rondon’s article? It’s all there. Nothing against you guys, but I’m not really convinced that it is possible to change public education. Sorry.”

Key-question: you are part of the leadership team of Todos and you are thinking about the organization’s work in the long run. How do you react to this overall scenario?
SHARING

GROUPS 3-4
3min each
LESSON LEARNED: BEWARE OF TOO MUCH BAD NEWS

Yes – one of most effective ways to create sense of urgency: give real light to the problem. But...

• What we have learned:
  • Risk: too much bad news for a really long time will make people tired. Or worse: they will start to believe it’s impossible to change the scenario or be susceptible to “magical” solutions.

• Concrete example:
  • Effort to amplify the “problem” of education is a trademark of Todos Pela Educação
  • What we picked up in 2017/2018:
    • Feedback from some public managers that were doing a good job: “you guys always talk about the bad stuff, hardly ever about the good stuff. Where is the political incentive/benefit?”
    • Presidential elections in 2018 – narrative of an “anti-establishment” candidate (that won): “everything in education is a complete disaster!”.
WHAT WE DID

What we have done in the recent past

1- Last year we launched a big initiative: “Education That Works Well”
   • 7 successful cases at scale – case studies, online platform and TV-documentary
   • One of our strategies this year (election year): Brazil has to learn from...Brazil.
IN CASE ANYONE WANTS DO DIG DEEPER....

Case of Ceará has already been translated

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNfUrPDqOlw
What we have done in the recent past

2- In our main “political” event this year, one of the main panels was “What Brazil can learn from Brazil”
WHAT WE DID

What we have done in the recent past

3- Press: “Brazil has to learn from Brasil” has become a part of our advocacy “pitch” + series of articles talking about these cases
Some results thus far...

- Presidential candidates talking about the cases
- Important political leaders mentioning the cases (i.e., Marina Silva, Geraldo Alckmin)
- Press with a more positive narrative (Especial Eleições Estadão, Series at GloboPlay, The Economist)
- Several articles by opinion leaders mentioning the cases

CASE C – “YOU DON’T FOOL ME”

March 2016, and Todos Pela Educação has just won an important award from one of Brazil’s main media outlets in recognition of its work thus far.

Over the following days, social media registers, by and large, very positive repercussions. But a not so positive tweet from an influential social leader gets impressive traction, reaching over 1 million people in less than 30 minutes:

“Todos Pela Educação says they do advocacy work, that they are independent, but look at that – they only have 9 donors, 6 of which are foundations linked to banks. And look at their board – all 9 donors are there. You have got to be kidding that these guys don’t have specific private interests. #YouDontFoolMe”.

The tweet dies down over the next few hours, but the leadership team of Todos decides to get together to discuss the matter and think about the importance of the issue in the long run.

Key-question: if you were part of the leadership team of Todos, do you think this is something to really worry about? Do you do anything in regards to that criticism? If so, what?
SHARING

GROUPS 5-6
3min each
LESSONS LEARNED / WHAT WE DID

Governance structure and funding is key for an advocacy organization

• **Key elements of our governance**
  
  • Strategic planning aligned with board, but Executive team has full autonomy on day-to-day positioning (allows for assertiveness and speed)
  
  • Change in 2020: smaller board (from 20 to 7) with specific “chairs” – only 1 for “donor”

• **Key elements of our funding**
  
  • 2015: 7 donors
  • 2022: 30 donors
  
  --> not “donor driven”, but “donor supported”; 

• No public funding whatsoever.
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SESSION BREAKDOWN

Educação Já (65 minutes)

I. Presentation: The “Educação Já” Case (15min)

II. Group activity and discussion (45min)

- Participants share reflections about their own experiences of dialogue and incidence between civil society and government (10min)

- Group discussions: insights we can draw from the Todos Pela Educação / Educação Já session (20min)

- Sharing the insights with the big group (15min)
THE EDUCAÇÃO JÁ CASE

Lesson learned: very important to make it explicit it “where do we want to arrive?”; but the “how do we get there?” changes the landscape

• Key question in 2017: “what will it take to transform Brazil’s Basic Education by 2030?”

✓ Evidenced-based and systemic approach

✓ Proposals built with diverse group of specialists (center-right / center / center-left)

✓ 6 month process to build main document

✓ Updated version this year

Obs: one of the 5 principles: “Brazil has to learn from Brazil!”
Lesson learned: very important to make it explicit it “where do we want to arrive?”; but the “how do we get there?” changes the landscape

• Launching of Educação Já, in 2018, changed our organization (and our impact)
  ✓ Moved us from an organization that does “advocacy for education” to an organization that does “advocacy for a specific agenda”
  ✓ Provided us with much more organizational focus, less susceptible to “nice ideas”;
  ✓ Aligned our spokespeople;
  ✓ Set parameters for the debate amongst center-left / center-right;
  ✓ During elections:
    ✓ Provided us with a clear agenda for political articulation and mobilization of civil society
    ✓ Has become a go-to agenda for several politicians / candidates;

Unforseen:
✓ Helped our funding
✓ Alignment of the NGO sector
Starting 2019 we decided to build a coalition of organizations (that do implementation work) under the Educação Já agenda

Impacts:

- “Collective action program”
- Clarity as far as “gaps”
- Articulated efforts when working with same government
GROUP ACTIVITY AND DISCUSSION

- Participants share reflections about their own experiences of dialogue and incidence between civil society and government (10min)

- Group discussions: insights we can draw from the Todos Pela Educação / Educação Já session (20min)

- Sharing the insights with the big group (15min)
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