

ENABLERS OF COALITIONS & POLITICAL WILL

Lessons From Delhi & São Paulo

Summary of an MPhil Thesis at the University of Oxford by Kathlyn Pattillo

BACKGROUND

Methodology & Case Summaries

Through a qualitative study, I surveyed 106 countries across Latin America, Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, to classify five types of cases and locations of 20 hubs for education reform activity. With a comparative political sociology approach, I utilized process tracing of case studies, document analysis, interviews with 23 key stakeholders, and two weeks of fieldwork in Brazil. I also relied on data from desk research, consultations with five experts, and expertise from a decade working for education nonprofits and funders across India, Uganda, South Africa, and Kenya. Ultimately, the study builds upon scholarship on coalitions, political will, social movements, systems change, and the political economy of education reform.

Case 1 - Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Delhi, India, 2015-2021. AAP launched in 2012 and won the Delhi Municipal Assembly in 2015. Their campaign pledged to reform Delhi's education system and once elected, party leaders mobilized a coalition of over a dozen nonprofits to implement extensive reforms in areas such as model schools, School Management Committees, an entrepreneurship curriculum, skills-based placement, infrastructure, and teacher training. This case is an example of when a political party in government prioritized education and took advantage of a political opportunity (demand for a new anti-corruption opposition party due to backlash against the BJP gaining power) to initiate a coalition managed by public institutions and nonprofits that impacts a city of over 32 million people.

Case 2 - Lemann Foundation (LF)'s Movimento pela Base (MPB) in São Paulo, Brazil, 2012-2018. Since 2002, LF has funded over 100 education actors in Brazil, in areas such as edtech, school principals, and government reform in states. In 2012, LF launched *Movimento pela Base*, which mobilized a coalition of over 65 leaders across diverse political parties, nonprofits, and academia to design and advocate for new national learning standards across Brazil. In this case, philanthropy created a coalition that increased the political will needed to initiate and sustain a national reform effort impacting over 215 million people – despite facing a highly complex, decentralized political system with coalitional presidentialism and obstacles including the Rousseff impeachment.

TAKEAWAYS & ACTION STEPS

1. Where you are matters, and cities help.

The study finds that the two successful coalitions share a common path. Four factors enabled a geographic location to be more likely to generate successful reform efforts, and all relate to the *environment* of an ecosystem (a theory summarized in Appendix I). (1) More than rural areas, **cities** have denser interaction networks and infrastructure to spread people, ideas, and innovations. (2) Places with higher **economic growth** have more wealth that can potentially be used for philanthropy to education coalitions, political parties that prioritize education, and education nonprofits. (3) Places with a higher influx of **pipelines of skilled talent** (i.e. people with higher levels of education), have more skilled leaders who can create change in any sector. (4) Some places have **embedded values** and cultural norms that foster collaboration between actors rather than individualistic competition.

2. But visionary leaders are essential.

It is not only that a specific geographic area may contain more enabling conditions. What makes a coalition possible is whether certain leaders actually *choose* to take action on education within that environment. For a coalition effort to exist, it needs: (5) **political entrepreneurs and activists** creating change inside and outside government; (6) **social entrepreneurs** creating organizations to deliver change and (7) **funders** to provide resources to these leaders. Often, if a place has these groups working in any sector (such as health or technology), it is more likely to have them in education. (8) When these seven factors combine in a place, it has the potential to have an eighth factor – to become an **education hub** where concentrated people, ideas, and movements emerge around education issues.

3. Coalitions can happen fast.

The study finds that in places with these eight factors, leaders can take one of at least two routes, a new concept of scenarios termed by the study. In **the Strike Scenario**, a government can have political will from the start and take advantage of emerging windows of opportunity to initiate a coalition of many organizations working together (like AAP).

4. Or they can happen slow.

In **the Slow-Build Scenario**, when political will does not exist and there are entrenched obstacles to reforms, actors can create a coalition that grows the political will needed to initiate and sustain a reform effort (like MPB). Although these two routes possess some differences, they both follow a similar overall process with five stages. For a full list of the steps for each route, see Appendix II. (The study surfaces two routes to coalitions, but additional case studies would likely find more).

5. We have a toolkit.

The study shows that despite how some factors are beyond their control, individual leaders can replicate many of the action steps taken in each scenario. The study offers a toolkit for coalition-building with steps that others can plug-and-play, adapt, and build on. For example:

- ***Accelerate talent pipelines:*** The Lemann Fellowship and Teach for India accelerated networks of committed leaders and activists into each ecosystem, who were then instrumental agents in each coalition. We can fund more leadership programs and Teach For All partners.
- ***Seed an ecosystem of skilled organizations:*** Central Square Foundation (CSF) advised the initial AAP reform effort and funded many organizations with head offices in Delhi; LF funded many organizations, which enabled a pool of leaders to exist who could be part of MPB's meetings in São Paulo. Both initiatives show how wealthy people can devote resources to strategic philanthropy, which can cultivate enabling conditions for coalitions (such as Ashish Dhawan and Jorge Paulo Lemann, who founded CSF and LF). Both foundations operate differently from most philanthropic organizations, through a long-term systems lens model (as documented [here](#)). More funders could replicate their methods.
- ***Amplify data to create political will:*** AAP Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia says [ASER](#) results spurred him to act on India's learning crisis. We can support data generators like the PAL Network.
- ***Spread activist skills:*** Over a decade before MPB, LF CEO Denis Mizne was trained by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Foundation in participatory planning, which shaped his advocacy mindset. Funders

can pay for more of this kind of training that equips leaders to be community organizers. Tactics and repertoires spread through networks.

- **Expose politicians to local progressive models:** Atishi taught at a school founded by educationist Jiddu Krishnamurthi, which shaped her commitment to education reform. This shows the power of funding models like Teach for All, which can inspire future politicians to prioritize education. One could also design more experiences to expose political leaders to new education models.
- **Enable knowledge-sharing outside of local context:** In both cases, coalition leaders also intentionally learned from international models; AAP ran trips to Singapore and Finland, and LF visited leaders involved in the US and Australian reforms. Funders can pay for more of these types of learning trips.
- **Grow critical trust and solidarity:** In-person trips can also accelerate relationships across a coalition group and allies (like the LF trip to Yale and AAP trip to a rural village). Funders can pay for trips that are intentionally designed to foster group solidarity across cultural and political divides.
- **Launch an orchestrator to increase political will:** Although one leader alone cannot solely transform their community into a hub with a high density of education changemakers, they can create vehicles that make it more likely. This study shows how one organization can create an institutional network (also called a backbone organization) that then makes moments of helpful political opportunity and political will more likely by building strong relationships, trust, and solidarity across a group (as MPB did when it intentionally designed and facilitated hundreds of meetings over six years).
- **Use a collaborative design process to grow buy-in and support:** Co-design with stakeholders makes a coalition more likely to succeed even when it faces inevitable crippling obstacles (through formal mechanisms like MPB's forums for states/municipalities associations to give feedback, and informal mechanisms like Manish Sisodia inviting teachers to his house for dinner discussions). Leaders can use more co-design methods in their coalitions.

6. Three leaders can spark systems change.

The study demonstrates how even in extremely difficult environments, just three individuals have the potential to spark systems change. Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia and Atishi catalyzed the AAP coalition. Jorge Paulo Lemann, Denis Mizne, and Alice Ribeiro catalyzed the MPB coalition. They are proof that even when faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles (like political instability, entrenched bureaucracy, and crumbling infrastructure), as few as **three individuals can mobilize a collective effort to shift a system**. This can inspire other Global South leaders by showing them what is possible, even when faced with seemingly insurmountable challenges.

7. But leaders are not enough.

However, it is important to recognize that there are many factors outside of any individual's control. These six leaders were operating in contexts with certain advantages. But history is shaped by chance, timing, and surprise. The study shows that leaders have less control over certain factors:

- One can start physical spaces and events that accelerate networks, but whether a **city organically emerges** with dense networks fostering innovation, which occurred in Delhi and São Paulo, is a crucial factor.
- Whether larger **trends cause economic growth** and lead to resources for philanthropy or political parties – as occurred in both. (Although in a country with less financial resources, funders from outside the country can support local action).

- Whether norms/practices/values embedded in a country or culture promote the **value of collective action** such as *associação*, cooperatives or *mutirão* in Brazil, or *seva* and *zakat* in India. Both countries also share a history of strong social movements due to (respectively) opposition to dictatorship and anti-colonial activists.
- **Whether and when certain events happen** that will offer enablers or threats to a change effort, which can happen due to luck – such as BJP candidate Narendra Modi becoming Prime Minister, which helped AAP win the Delhi Assembly the next year, or how during Dilma Rousseff’s impeachment, Michel Temer’s administration appointed Maria Helena Guimarães de Castro to be second in command at the Ministry of Education (a core MPB member after attending the MPB Yale trip). (However, creating networks like MPB can make it more likely that chance will work in a coalition’s favor).

8. Politicians can make a difference.

Often conversations about education reform focus on highlighting the right policies or figuring out which interventions work best. But the obstacles to change are often not technical – they are political. The study highlights the ways that in certain places, politicians have political will or value coalitions, such as:

- Catalytic **politicians in small countries:** President Sirleaf and Minister Werner in Liberia, President Bio and Minister Sengeh in Sierra Leone.
- Catalytic **politicians in small centralized countries:** President Kagame in Rwanda.
- **State/province-led education reforms in large decentralized countries:** We see instances of local politicians leading the way when there is not enough progress at the federal level: Governor Obaseki in Edo State, Nigeria; (former) Chief Minister Sharif in Punjab State, Pakistan; Chief Minister Kejriwal in Delhi union territory, India.
- There are also mayors leading at the **city level**, such as Ivo Gomes in Sobral, Brazil.

Considering these examples, are there ways we can foster and reward the kind of visionary leadership shown by these politicians? Can we create greater gains for political will that prioritize education reform for long-term results, in political systems that often reward short-term gains in election cycles?

9. We can leverage geography.

The study surfaces trends such as a process of diffusion and spread of an education reform community – from a megacity hub out to nearby states. For example:

- Diffusion from **cities to proximate states:** Puebla State is only a 2.5-hour drive from Mexico City, and the capital of Edo State is only a 4-hour drive from Lagos. There are also education reforms in progress in Haryana State in India (which surrounds Delhi State),
- Diffusion between **twin cities:** Bogotá/Medellín (a 1-hour flight) in Colombia, Johannesburg/ Cape Town (a 2-hour flight apart) in South Africa.

In light of this, can we capitalize on proximity and intentionally foster more knowledge-sharing and interaction between leaders in a specific geographic area?

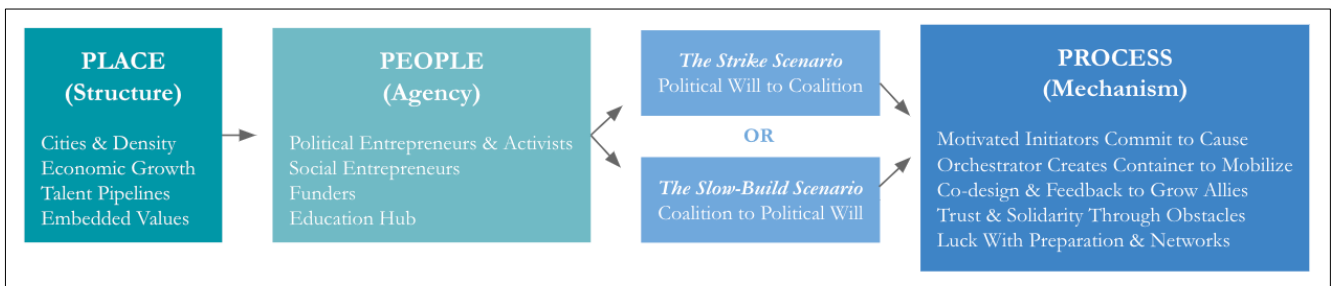
10. Coalitions and political will inspire more coalitions and political will – like wildfire.

In Brazil, the examples of coalitions like MPB and Todos pela Educação helped create an enabling environment for more coalitions to emerge. New coalitions include the Brazilian Creative Learning Network, Conectando Saberes Network, Arco Instituto’s community of practice for youth-focused organizations, and

an Imaginable Futures-supported group for racial equity in education. This diffusion is similar to progress in India, where AAP seems to inspire other political parties to prioritize education. As AAP gained control over Punjab State and aims to gain Karnataka and Gujarat, other parties are seeing that prioritizing education can be politically advantageous. Considering these diffusion processes, there is power in documenting more stories of successful coalitions and political will. The study identifies 18 other hubs, such as Bogotá/Medellín, Freetown, and Lahore (full list in Appendix III). Education systems would benefit from further case studies on these contexts, as they could inspire leaders across the Global South to take action.

The author welcomes any questions or critiques to kat@edwell.io.

APPENDIX I – A THEORY FOR WHY SOME PLACES GENERATE COALITIONS & POLITICAL WILL AND OTHERS DO NOT



APPENDIX II – HOW TO BUILD A COALITION

	THE AAP PROCESS – The Strike Scenario	THE MPB PROCESS – The Slow-Build Scenario
	19 steps for leaders who start with political will. (For descriptions, see thesis pages 35-58).	17 steps for leaders who need to grow political will. (For descriptions, see thesis pages 62-85).
1 Motivated Initiators Commit to Cause	1A. Commit to start a new party 1B. Commit to education in a certain place as a priority issue 1C. Win the power and mandate to do it	1A. A highly committed funder with an advocacy mindset 1B. Activist skills 1C. Benchmarking against other countries to choose a goal 1D. Clear outcomes with adaptive funding
2 Orchestrator Creates Container to Mobilize	2A. Technocratic skills for execution 2B. Availability of implementation experts 2C. Support from an active funder 2D. Orchestrator for skilled facilitation of coalition process 2E. Learning from non-Delhi models	2A. Skills to facilitate and design a coalition process 2B. Participant selection 2C. Norms for a space of trust
3 Co-Design & Feedback to Grow Allies	3A. Process of co-design 3B. Oversight and quality control of implementation 3C. Pressure to deliver visible results 3D. Partners willing to let politicians take the credit	3A. Co-creation to increase buy-in 3B. 1-1 Relationship-building 3C. Feedback loops and research production – inside Brazil 3D. Technical knowledge through feedback loops and research – outside Brazil
4 Trust & Solidarity Through Obstacles	4A. Incentives to use coalition approach 4B. Informal relationship-building between partners 4C. Resistance to change from the system 4D. Belief that the system could change	4A. Consensus despite diverse views 4B. Collaborating towards a shared goal 4C. Momentum to gain traction
5 Luck With Preparation & Networks	5A. Personal values 5B. Timing & choices 5C. Interactions	5A. Personal values 5B. Timing & choices 5C. Interactions

APPENDIX III – 20 HUBS FOR EDUCATION REFORM IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Categories 1-4 include all hubs. Category 5 includes examples of places that are not hubs. (For descriptions of all five categories and the cases listed, see thesis pages 92-99).

Type of Case	Place <i>Structure</i>	People <i>Agency</i>	Coalition <i>Process</i>	Political Will <i>Process</i>
1. Coalitions With Political Will				
	Delhi, São Paulo	High	High	High
	Nairobi, Lahore	High	High	High
	Johannesburg/Cape Town	High	High	High
2. Political Will in Difficult Environments				
	Addis Ababa	Medium	Low	Medium
	Freetown, Monrovia, Kigali	Medium	High	High
	Quito	Medium	Low	High
3. Political Will in Easier Environments				
	Lima, Santiago, Hanoi	Medium	Low	High
	Accra	Medium	High	High
	Mexico City/Puebla State, Lagos/Edo State	Medium	Low	High
4. Non-state Actors in Low Political Will				
	Kampala, Jakarta, Dhaka, Bogotá/Medellín	Medium	Low	Low
<i>While 1-4 include all instances of that type in the Global South, 5 is not exhaustive as it is a sample of 86 instances of that type.</i>				
5. Rare Coalitions or Political Will				
<i>War & Conflict</i>				
	Kabul, Khartoum, Kinshasa	Low	Medium	Low
<i>Economic Crisis</i>				
	Caracas, Buenos Aires	Low	Low	Low
<i>Humanitarian & Political Crisis</i>				
	Cairo, Port-au-Prince	Low	Medium	Low
<i>Predominantly Rural</i>				
	Bamako, Managua, Thimpu	Low	Low	Low

KEY

- Low
- Medium
- High

APPENDIX IV – TOOLKIT FOR COALITION-BUILDING

How to Build an Effective Coalition for Education Reform **A Toolkit from *Movimento pela Base* in Brazil**

Kathlyn Pattillo
November 2022

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I. BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

Many Failing Systems, Few Success Stories

We have plenty of evidence about what interventions can help to strengthen learning outcomes in the Global South. However, the greater problem is **adoption** and **scale-up**. Most education systems do not create large-scale policies that are based on evidence. This is for a range of reasons, such as how politicians are incentivized to prioritize reforms with short-term instead of long term results (due to election cycles), school leader positions where promotion is based on political patronage instead of technocratic expertise, and leaders prioritizing emergency response over reforms to areas like teacher development (due to obstacles such as ongoing civil war, terrorism, or natural disasters).

However, there are examples of where, despite these challenges, an education system in the Global South did shift to adopt an evidence-based reform. One example is the case of the *Movimento pela Base* (MPB) coalition, which impacted over 40 million students in Brazil.¹

Context of Movimento pela Base

The [Lemann Foundation](#) (LF), funded by the wealthiest Brazilian in the world (Jorge Paulo Lemann), launched in 2002 with a focus on education and leadership development. Before Denis Mizne was hired in 2011, the Foundation's board decided to pursue advocacy for policy reforms in the education sector. Under Mizne's leadership, the Foundation chose the adoption of national learning standards as an area of focus (standards would mean that teachers across Brazil would align on a common understanding of what skills students need to learn by which age, instead of complete decentralization with all schools deciding what skills to teach when). Starting in 2012, the Foundation funded the launch of MPB, a new coalition that brought together over 65 leaders from across diverse political parties, government agencies, civil society, and academia. MPB managed to successfully design and advocate for adoption of a set of common standards across the federal level, along with the majority of states and municipalities across Brazil (the standards were ratified in 2017 and 2018).

This coalition is particularly remarkable because it was unlikely to succeed. It faced many challenges, including political instability. Since the start of the coalition, there were X different Presidents, thirteen Ministers of Education, and the impeachment of President Dilma Rouseff in 2016. There was also massive mobilization and highly organized protests and criticism against the national learning standards by groups such as academics and evangelicals. Although Brazil is well-resourced in comparison to most Global South countries, it still faces many entrenched obstacles that make it difficult to generate political will for education reforms. It also has extreme racial inequality, due to its history of marginalizing indigenous groups and slavery (Brazil imported more slaves than any other country and was the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery, in 1888).

¹ Over 80% of Brazilian students attend government primary and secondary schools.

As a result of these issues, Brazil faces a learning crisis like so many Global South countries. According to the OECD, “half of the 15-year-olds in Brazil lack a baseline level of proficiency in reading.”² This learning crisis was worsened by the Covid pandemic, as schools in Brazil were shut for an average of 546 days.³ It is in this context that MPB promoted standards that aimed to enable all schools across Brazil to provide a higher-quality education. The case of MPB is proof that even when faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles (like political instability, entrenched bureaucracy, and hard-to-reach schools in rural areas), as few as three individuals can catalyze a collective effort to shift a system.

Goals

This toolkit documents the process by which the success story of MPB occurred. While other case studies highlight components of the reform or the resistance to it, this toolkit aims to offer a different lens. It is written for practitioners who hope to create their own coalitions for education reforms in Brazil and other countries. It uses accessible, non-academic language to share the methods, technical process, and enabling conditions that made MPB possible. Our hope is that you - leaders in other contexts - can learn from and adapt lessons from MPB.

Summary

The following page includes a summary of the toolkit and the steps used by MPB. The toolkit shares methods first and then factors that created the enabling environment. This is because while the environment factors are harder for any individual to influence, the methods can more easily be applied in places that are different from the birthplace of MPB, São Paulo.

This toolkit shows that you have minimal control over whether a **city** emerges in your location with organically dense networks, the fate of larger **economic trends** and growth, or whether practices embedded in your country or culture promote the **value of collective action**. You cannot control **whether and when certain events happen** that will offer enablers or threats to a change effort (such as how during President Dilma Rousseff’s impeachment, Michel Temer’s administration appointed Maria Helena Guimarães de Castro to be second in command at the Ministry of Education - a leader who was a core MPB member since MPB’s inception).

However, you can take many powerful action steps. You can create **talent pipelines**, such as how the Lemann Fellowship accelerated networks of committed leaders and activists into Brazil’s ecosystem. You can **amplify data to create political will** (MPB generated dozens of studies with data that it shared with MPB members). You can leverage the **power of an orchestrator** and start an institutional network that makes moments of helpful political opportunity and political will more likely due to strong relationships, trust, and solidarity across your group (as MPB did). You can involve stakeholders in a **co-design process**, which makes your coalition more likely to succeed even when it faces inevitable crippling obstacles (through mechanisms like the MPB forums for states and municipalities associations to give feedback). You can create in-person trips to accelerate relationships across your coalition group (like the Lemann Foundation’s trip to Yale).

² OECD 2022.

³ UNESCO 2022.

Finally, we hope that this toolkit brings you hope and courage to find a few collaborators and get started. Jorge Paulo Lemann, Denis Mizne, and Alice Ribeiro were the three leaders who catalyzed the MPB coalition (along with the later support of many other leaders who became part of the movement). You can follow their lead to initiate systems change in your community.

Key Definitions

This toolkit defines a coalition as a group of leaders coming together from across multiple entities (government and outside government) in an alliance for a shared goal - to design and implement an effort to reform an education system (in the case of MPB, government-run schools). In this context, an “effective” coalition is one that reaches its goals of changing specific policies and programs. Political will is when politicians and leaders in government agencies have the desire and commitment to prioritize education issues. Education reforms are efforts to improve learning outcomes through policies or programs across government-run and private education systems.

Criticism

It is beyond the scope of this toolkit to address all criticisms of the MPB coalition. Critics question the concept of core competencies or centralization, or claim that MPB is part of a LF plot to exert a neoliberal and capitalist agenda. Denise Carreira argues that government agencies used the new standards as an excuse to cut resources to other areas in education.⁴ Others critique that MPB does not reflect the interests of most Brazilians, who are Black and Indigenous; the MPB team estimates that of roughly 60 MPB members, only one is Black and the rest are White.

Others question whether MPB can even be considered a success. This toolkit primarily covers the period prior to Jair Bolsonaro’s Presidency from 2019-2022, when the reforms faced crippling challenges. Some federal agencies necessary for standards implementation came to a standstill, and many Bolsonaro administration officials refused to meet with MPB staff. MPB’s Observatory and ProBNCC try to support states and municipalities to implement the standards,⁵ but this was particularly difficult during Covid school closures. Luiz Inácio Lula de Silva’s election as President in October 2022 changes these dynamics, because his administration will likely be more supportive of MPB’s agenda. Regardless, there is still a long way to go before national learning standards are implemented with quality in all Brazilian schools, so the ultimate “success” of MPB has yet to be achieved. However, we believe it is still useful to share methods from MPB because it is a rare case of a coalition that successfully influenced the adoption of a new large-scale education policy in a Global South context.

⁴ Carreira, interview with author, February 10, 2022.

⁵ For more on resources created for implementation: Costin and Pontual 2020, 61.

Summary

THE MPB PROCESS IN 25 STEPS

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

A	Place With Enabling Conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 City with dense networks2 Economic growth generates capital3 Pipelines of skilled talent4 History that creates shared practices and embedded values
B	Visionary Leaders	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5 Political entrepreneurs and activists6 Social entrepreneurs7 Funders

METHODS

C	Motivated Initiators Commit to Cause	<ol style="list-style-type: none">8 A highly committed funder with an advocacy mindset9 Activist skills10 Benchmarking against other countries to choose a goal11 Clear outcomes with adaptive funding
D	Orchestrator Creates Container to Mobilize	<ol style="list-style-type: none">12 Skills to facilitate and design a coalition process13 Participant selection14 Norms for a space of trust
E	Co-Design & Feedback to Grow Allies	<ol style="list-style-type: none">15 Co-creation to increase buy-in16 1-1 Relationship-building17 Feedback loops and research production – inside Brazil18 Technical knowledge, feedback loops and research – outside Brazil
F	Trust & Solidarity Through Obstacles	<ol style="list-style-type: none">19 Consensus despite diverse views20 Collaborating towards a shared goal21 Momentum to gain traction22 Monitoring implementation for accountability
G	Luck With Preparation & Networks	<ol style="list-style-type: none">23 Personal values24 Timing and choices25 Interactions

II. TOOLKIT - PART 1: METHODS

While most efforts to create similar national education reforms in the Global South fail to be enshrined into law - due to factors such as a draft policy being stalled by a new President or divergent political parties failing to find consensus - MPB is the rare outlier reform effort that was sustained in a difficult political environment. This section explains what methods MPB used to succeed. First, it offers a summary of what you can do, then describes MPB's methods and detailed steps to their process.

TAKEAWAYS

- **Accelerate talent pipelines:** the Lemann Fellowship accelerated networks of committed leaders and activists into Brazil's education ecosystem, who were then instrumental agents in the coalition. You can fund leadership programs like these, such as Teach For All network partners.
- **Seed an ecosystem of skilled organizations:** Lemann Foundation funded many organizations, which enabled a pool of leaders to exist who could be part of MPB's meetings. You can support more wealthy people to devote resources to strategic philanthropy, because it can cultivate enabling conditions for coalitions (such as Jorge Paulo Lemann). Lemann Foundation operates differently from most philanthropies, through a long-term systems lens model (as documented [here](#)); you can enable more funders to replicate their methods.
- **Amplify data to create political will:** MPB frequently shared research and data with MPB members and other key stakeholders, to advocate and influence. You can support and fund organizations that generate data and research.
- **Spread activist skills:** Over a decade before MPB, Lemann Foundation CEO Denis Mizne was trained by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Foundation in participatory planning, which shaped his advocacy mindset. You can fund more of this kind of training that equips leaders to be community organizers. Tactics and repertoires spread through networks.
- **Enable knowledge-sharing outside of local context:** Coalition leaders intentionally learned from international models. LF visited leaders involved in the United States and Australian reforms. LF also paid for MPB members to travel to the US to be exposed to the US Common Core reforms (which had implemented national learning standards). You can fund or participate in these types of learning trips.
- **Grow critical trust and solidarity:** In-person trips can also accelerate relationships across a coalition group and allies (like the LF trip to Yale University). You can lead and pay for trips that are intentionally designed to foster group solidarity across divides.

- **Launch an orchestrator to increase political will:** Although one leader alone cannot make your location become a hub with a high density of education leaders who will participate in a coalition, you can create vehicles that make it more likely. The toolkit shows how one organization can create an institutional network (also called a backbone organization) that makes moments of helpful political opportunity and political will more likely because it creates strong relationships, trust, and solidarity across a group (as MPB did when it intentionally facilitated hundreds of meetings).
- **Use a co-design process to grow buy-in and support:** Co-design with stakeholders makes your coalition more likely to succeed even when it faces inevitable crippling obstacles (through formal mechanisms like MPB's forums for states/municipalities associations to give feedback). You can use more co-design methods in your coalition.

METHODS OF MOVIMENTO PELA BASE

C

MOTIVATED INITIATORS COMMIT TO CAUSE

Overview

As part two will explain, certain places have more political entrepreneurs, activists, social entrepreneurs, and funders, than other places. But even when a place has many leaders working on social issues, they will not necessarily focus on the issue of education reform in government schools. A first critical factor is local leaders who decide to prioritize an education cause. Doug McAdam, an expert on social movements, stresses how core groups of leaders were critical for the success of the civil rights movement.⁶

This toolkit shows that three leaders can spark systems change. When working in a difficult and constantly shifting environment, it is critical to have a few key leaders at the start who can support each other, both to celebrate the wins and also vent during moments of pessimism. Although dozens of key leaders enabled MPB's success, Jorge Paulo Lemann, Denis Mizne, and Alice Ribeiro were the most critical catalysts at the beginning of the MPB coalition.

8. A HIGHLY COMMITTED FUNDER WITH AN ADVOCACY MINDSET

The first step was that Lemann Foundation decided to lead advocacy. When LF started in 2002, it took a more traditional approach, such as distributing grants for teacher training. LF's board decided to aim for bigger systems level impact. In 2011, they hired Denis Mizne as CEO, who had previously founded a Brazilian gun control advocacy campaign. Mizne says when he arrived at LF, he had a mandate from the board to influence public policies.⁷

⁶ McAdam 1982, 47.

⁷ Mizne, interview with author, October 13, 2021.

As a result, Mizne had resources to pay for MPB’s launch and associated costs. For example, as Taulau and Moeller point out, during the coalition process, LF “supported government officials by paying for the lunch served at meetings or buying plane tickets so that officials could attend national events.”⁸

9. ACTIVIST SKILLS

Camila Pereira, on LF’s staff since 2009, noticed that Mizne’s arrival marked a clear shift in the organization. She explains, “this is what changed when Denis came in, this idea of if we want to get to scale, we are going to do **advocacy to influence the public sector**.”⁹ LF leaders realized they could use their position as an apolitical institution to create a neutral advocacy space. Prior to MPB, LF had produced and disseminated some knowledge content, but it had not influenced policies. After Mizne arrived, LF started co-creating new reforms.

Mizne has a background as an activist and advocate for systems change; he learned methods and tactics from scaling *Instituto Sou da Paz*.¹⁰ In addition, Alice Ribeiro (hired in 2014 to lead MPB), had activist skills because she worked with Mizne at *Instituto Sou da Paz* (from 2010-2012) and she worked at Todos pela Educação, another coalition on education issues (from 2006-2009). With these skills, Mizne and Ribeiro knew how to launch an advocacy coalition in Brazil.

LF used research to choose a cause. Julia Tami Ishikawa, an LF staff member who supported MPB from 2014, illustrates how this worked. “When we understood that there was a consensus around a specific topic that came from the research we did, like what should a national system do to move to advance, it then became an agenda for advocacy.”¹¹ The Foundation had a research team and in 2012, renamed this the Education Policy team,¹² which reflects the organization’s evolution from research to shifting government policies.

10. BENCHMARKING AGAINST OTHER COUNTRIES TO CHOOSE A GOAL

LF staff studied what reforms had been most successful to improve other education systems, such as Australia, Singapore, South Africa, and the United States’ Common Core (where the Gates Foundation spent over \$200 million¹³). They decided national learning standards – where all schools in a country have clear guidance on what skills students should learn by what age – was a catalytic policy reform.

⁸ Taulau and Moeller 2020, 349.

⁹ Pereira, interview with author, January 6, 2022.

¹⁰ Mizne, interview with author, October 13, 2021.

¹¹ Ishikawa, interview with author, January 3, 2022.

¹² Taulau and Moeller 2020, 345.

¹³ Layton 2014.

Pereira says the LF team realized that in Brazil, “we don’t have the standards that guarantee some alignment around the whole system.”¹⁴ They believed standards could catalyze alignment between all parts of Brazil’s education system towards clear goals (assessments, content, textbooks, and teacher training).¹⁵ Even though Brazil adopted national assessments in the 1990’s, states and municipalities had autonomy to design their own curriculums. As a result, there was huge variation across Brazil in terms of learning outcomes.

After LF staff decided to pursue this issue, they researched how Brazil’s 27 states were designing curriculums. Benchmarking was important at this initial phase and was a key guiding principle throughout the MPB coalition.

11. CLEAR OUTCOMES WITH ADAPTIVE FUNDING

A key enabler was that a funder was willing to invest vast resources towards a long-term outcome, while remaining flexible through a process that would ultimately take nearly a decade from the point of inception to policy ratification. Pereira speaks about how LF did not require plans years in advance, saying, “being very adaptive and flexible to answer the demands of the people in charge of the process was something that we did all the time.”¹⁶ They committed to the ultimate result of the standards and within that, an evolving process. Ribeiro says, “they were really flexible with the strategies to reach those goals, but they were always very clear about what should be achieved.”¹⁷ Mizne stresses this long-term view, underscoring, “**these problems cannot be solved in a four-year term.**”¹⁸

In practical terms, this commitment was reflected in how much money and team time LF invested into the MPB coalition, even when at any moment the reform could be stalled or killed entirely. For the first few years of MPB, LF had three staff working full-time on it. For example, Ishikawa spent a small portion of her time with LF on budgets and planning, and the rest supporting Ribeiro to run the MPB coalition.¹⁹ LF also provided desks and meeting space in their office to MPB staff.²⁰

Ribeiro, the CEO of MPB, stresses that her relationship with LF was based on co-creation and action. “They were all the time very genuinely...interested in what people had to say...to build it together and not to come from top...There's something in Lemann Foundation’s mindset that was really great for the movement...which was [that] we always have to be concrete, we always have to have a plan...If we stopped, we’re going to freeze...They would always [say]... ‘Put something on the table with as much quality as we can based on evidence, but let’s put something on the table. We cannot freeze because if we do, everybody is going to freeze. So let’s keep

¹⁴ Pereira, interview with author, January 6, 2022.

¹⁵ Costin and Pontual 2020, 48.

¹⁶ Pereira, interview with author, January 6, 2022.

¹⁷ Ribeiro, interview 2 with author, January 11, 2022.

¹⁸ Mizne, interview with author, October 13, 2021.

¹⁹ Ishikawa, interview with author, January 3, 2022.

²⁰ MPB later became an independent entity.

moving'...That was really important for the cause. Because **it's a mindset that is not common in Brazil.**"²¹

This was because of the underlying culture of LF. LF is staffed entirely by Brazilians invested in the future of Brazil over the long-term, in contrast to funders living outside the country who are more hesitant to support risky advocacy in an unfamiliar context, where years of expensive work can lead to a policy being thrown out by a politician.²² LF's positionality allowed their team to understand the constantly shifting realities of local leaders in government, and make quick decisions to adapt to their needs.

As a result, MPB developed a culture of being responsive to government as surprising or unplanned needs arose. As Crantschaninov and Segatto write, "MPB listened to government stakeholders and did everything in its power to be ready and flexible to meet Standards-related needs coming from the federal, state and municipal governments. This posed challenges to MPB's strategy planning and execution actions...It was necessary to give priority to providing quick responses to last-minute requests, as they signaled actual issues that decision makers were facing along the process."²³

LF's culture - of focusing on outcomes with flexibility in process - is also likely influenced by the founder's other ventures. Jorge Paulo Lemann is well known for promoting a relentless focus on outcomes at his companies.²⁴ According to Mizne, the Foundation's board annually visits schools and meets grantees to see the work firsthand.²⁵ Jorge Paulo Lemann is a board member, so his leadership shaped the DNA of his foundation.

According to Erica Butow, the head of an education nonprofit funded by LF, LF's culture is also because of the skills and values of its CEO. She explains, Mizne "created the largest movement in public security in the country...right after college. So he had all this entrepreneur experience...He spent 12 years...leading that movement...He knows the other side...He has been through the hardships and then he enters in this foundation and has access to money."²⁶

D **ORCHESTRATOR CREATES CONTAINER TO MOBILIZE**

Overview

²¹ Ribeiro, interview 2 with author, January 11, 2022.

²² Pattillo 2021.

²³ Crantschaninov and Segatto 2022, 48.

²⁴ See Correa 2014, Mello 2014.

²⁵ Mizne, interview with author, October 13, 2021.

²⁶ Butow, interview with author, January 28, 2022.

For a coalition to succeed, it is important that at least one organization plays the role of orchestrator. Orchestrators bring together multiple actors to work toward a collective goal and foster a network of participants with strong relationships. Management theorists call these intermediaries or backbone organizations.²⁷

Experts on collective action and social movements also stress the way institutional networks, formal infrastructure for organizing, and informal networks and relationships between people, were critical for movements advancing issues such as women's rights and civil rights.²⁸ This network infrastructure can be created by an orchestrator, and an orchestrator can create spaces that simulate the kind of interactions that happen organically in other spaces. For example, taverns (bars) were critical for the United States revolution, and in other places, the equivalents were English coffeehouses, French *chambrées*, and church or commercial groups.²⁹ Strong relationships enable participants to access critical knowledge, support to implement a coalition, and motivation when facing obstacles. In the case of MPB, Lemann Foundation was the initial orchestrator who guided the process, alongside informal interactions and relationships. LF created MPB and the organization eventually spun out into an independent organization in X year.

12. SKILLS TO FACILITATE AND DESIGN A COALITION PROCESS

Once LF decided to support a reform effort for national learning standards, they hired Laura Freebairn-Smith, who helped design and facilitate an initial gathering in 2013. LF flew 30 leaders to the US for three days at Yale, to bring together the most influential leaders in Brazil's education sector and expose them to Common Core experts and gauge whether they would discuss standards for Brazil. As Tarlau and Moeller mention, this trip was critical to expose participants to the concept of standards for the first time and shape their beliefs. For example, Eduardo Deschamps attended and he was later President of two institutions with powerful influence over the standards reform³⁰; he played a critical role as a coalition ally. Deschamps claims the trip was a key learning moment, saying, "it was when I went to the United States and I had **contact with the Common Core**. Truthfully, until that point, [national learning standards] was not on my radar."³¹

LF hired Alice Ribeiro in 2014 to lead MPB forward. LF brought Freebairn-Smith to Brazil to train Ribeiro and her team with methods for how to facilitate coalition meetings. Ribeiro and LF intentionally chose every detail for all MPB meetings – such as venue, time of day, and agenda – to cultivate a specific dynamic to better achieve MPB's goals. All MPB meetings had a clear structure with objectives and outputs, so that participants knew their time would be used wisely. Facilitators kept the group focused; when discussions veered off topic, they parked the new topic for later. This helped the group work through smaller steps so that every meeting did not become mired in conflict over contentious issues.

²⁷ Senge and Kramer 2011, Batillana and Kimsey 2017, Lente et al 2003.

²⁸ Tarrow 1994, 127; McAdam 1982, 44; Tarrow 1994, 123.

²⁹ Tarrow 1994.

³⁰ CONSED in 2015, CNE in 2016.

³¹ Tarlau and Moeller 2020, 346.

13. PARTICIPANT SELECTION

One of the most critical elements of the coalition was deciding who would be part of it. LF chose to adopt a process of selecting and inviting in members, instead of designing it as an open group for anyone to join. While in the beginning the selection process was led by LF and Ribeiro, later selection was by consensus amongst MPB members.

Prior to the Yale trip, LF did not have many relationships with leaders across Brazil's education system, so LF conducted over a hundred interviews to generate a list of 28 people to be invited, that would be "diverse and representative."³² As Manuel Palacios has said, "the idea was to bring together people from **different orientations to influence public opinion in favor of a particular policy**...Lemann was an innovator in this."³³

According to Petherick et al, the Yale group included "government officials, state education secretaries, and representatives of other foundations and NGOs."³⁴ According to Costin and Pontual, it included "people associated with all sides of the political spectrum, those who had worked for the leftist Worker's Party (PT), the center-leftist Social Democratic Party (PSDB), as well as the more conservative Democratic Party (DEM) and the centrist Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB)."³⁵ As Crantschaninov and Segatto write, the group "included representatives of the Federal Government, Undime, CNE, the São Paulo State Council of Education, and the Education Commission of the Lower House, as well as National Institute of Education Research and Studies' technical staff, members of the Congress, and state and municipal education secretaries."³⁶

Having political rivals in the same group led to occasional tension. Ishikawa admits, "in the beginning, we had people who would never sit together in the same table."³⁷ When one participant landed at the US airport and saw who else was invited, they refused to board the bus.³⁸ But as Mizne notes, this commitment to bringing diverse political views together was critical for the coalition to succeed. He stresses, "our role is **facilitating conversations**...we have a strong commitment to put all sides around the table. It is a lot of power to build the table."³⁹

MPB grew from 28 people at Yale to over 60 members in 2021.⁴⁰ Some were in their personal capacity and some were included because of institutional affiliation. In addition to roughly 60

³² Tarlau and Moeller 2020, 346.

³³ Tarlau and Mueller 2020, 352.

³⁴ Petherick et al 2022, 4.

³⁵ Costin and Pontual 2020, 50.

³⁶ Crantschaninov and Segatto 2022, 31.

³⁷ Ishikawa, interview by author, January 3, 2022.

³⁸ Petherick et al 2022, 4.

³⁹ Mizne, interview with author, October 13, 2021.

⁴⁰ For network maps of key institutions and their interactions: Avelar and Ball 2019, 69 and 71.

formal members, roughly 20-30 other people participated in MPB meetings; they were not ‘official’ members because they held certain positions in government, but they were key allies to the reform process. While most members or their organizations paid for their transport to attend MPB meetings (which were usually held in São Paulo), for members particularly important to the process, LF paid for their flights.

14. NORMS FOR A SPACE OF TRUST

Facilitators developed norms that grew trust amongst MPB members, which was a critical part of the coalition process design. MPB meetings were confidential. No one could record or share what was said with press,⁴¹ and they were closed to members only, with no advisors or press allowed. These norms allowed participants to speak honestly. As an MPB leader explains, “*Movimento* had a space to talk, and a **safe space**. People really trust us.”⁴² In one technical meeting with curriculum experts to agree on guiding principles, Ishikawa noticed that “it was these eight people talking about their beliefs around curriculum and being able to be vulnerable.”⁴³ Many interviewees emphasized how this “safe space” and trust helped MPB succeed.

The coalition focused on **in-person meetings** (switched to virtual in March 2020 due to Covid). The facilitators saw Yale as a powerful opportunity to build relationships across the group. According to Mizne, it offered a “neutral space” that **transplanted people outside their normal environment**.⁴⁴ LF thought that this location outside Brazil could make it more likely that by the end of the three days, group members would agree to discuss standards, even if they did not agree on what content should be in them.

Mizne shares that the spaces created at Yale and MPB meetings were based on LF values about relationship-building and consensus; he says, “we have a deep belief in dialogue.”⁴⁵ As Pereira states, LF saw their role as facilitators of an emergent process rather than imposing their view of what was needed. They believed “**we should be guardians of the safe space that this group created** to talk among themselves.”⁴⁶

E

CO-DESIGN & FEEDBACK TO GROW ALLIES

Overview

An orchestrator can use participatory approaches to involve stakeholders in the process. This strengthens the quality of overall advocacy and implementation, and grows their buy-in to defend the cause when necessary. LF and MPB used co-design to increase the number of allies so that

⁴¹ Ishikawa, interview with author, January 3, 2022.

⁴² Souza, interview with author, January 10, 2022.

⁴³ Ishikawa, interview with author, January 3, 2022.

⁴⁴ Mizne, interview with author, October 13, 2021.

⁴⁵ Mizne, interview with author, October 13, 2021.

⁴⁶ Pereira, interview with author, January 6, 2022.

influential leaders would support the cause, as well as to ensure that thousands of critics felt heard and involved in the design process.

15. CO-CREATION TO INCREASE BUY-IN

After the initial gathering at Yale in 2013, the MPB group met for at least three meetings each year, with many small group working meetings in between. 45 leaders went on a second trip to Yale in 2014.⁴⁷

All meetings were structured to have sections for **updates**, **learning**, and **co-creation**. As Ribeiro explains, “we would first share how the construction or the implementation is going. We would have a part which was training for everybody, which was new...And we would have a part in which people produce something together.”⁴⁸ At Yale, participants learned about Common Core and other reform efforts (through school visits and experts), with time for relationship-building in small groups. Later meetings enabled members to hear updates on the process, learn new information related to the standards, and create an output together.

The Yale gathering created an initial moment of mobilization that made people care about the cause, and later MPB meetings grew this commitment. As Pereira explains, members were willing to support the reform through so much instability later on because they “were really convinced of the potential impact of this policy.”⁴⁹ **The process itself created this commitment.** The act of producing something together made the coalition succeed, because so many allies wanted to support the process. And even though there were people who initially did not want to be part of the coalition, when they saw many others join and have their input valued, they also wanted to have their voices heard.

16. 1-1 RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING

The trips were key for in-person relationship-building across the group. As Avelar and Ball point out, “the social aspect of such events, and trips, should not be neglected. They propel conversations and the building of trust, which are essential for the coherence of networks...Over time, members of this ‘community’ have come to know each other well, work together and **share the values which inform their choices and commitments**; and they generate and share persuasive arguments that can be used in more hostile contexts.”⁵⁰

Ribeiro also met many members and key leaders one-on-one over coffee, to make sure they felt heard and included in the process. Interviewees stressed Ribeiro’s skills as a listener; often when MPB members were upset, they called her and she calmly discussed their concerns. She used networks through MPB members (and her own friends) to reach people in areas of influence and

⁴⁷ Avelar and Ball 2019, 68.

⁴⁸ Ribeiro, interview 2 with author, January 11, 2022.

⁴⁹ Pereira, interview with author, January 6, 2022.

⁵⁰ Avelar and Ball 2019, 68.

build relationships with them. Finally, she used frequent communication to keep all stakeholders informed, such as how she sent weekly email updates to members. She leveraged her experience as a journalist to communicate frequently with the media to ensure they were updated on the movement.

MPB members also participated in many meetings with key stakeholders such as UNDIME and CONSED (associations of municipalities and states), to ensure that national standards were discussed. As one member of MPB said, “the importance of the movement is to be there poking (*cutucando*) people, pressuring them.”⁵¹

As Avelar and Ball explain, the MPB “network draws on a variety of direct interpersonal social relations and high levels of interpersonal trust and is animated by face-to-face interactions... Conferences, workshops, discussion groups are occasions for the reiteration, reinvention, and re-affirmation of discourse and **allegiances**.”⁵²

17. FEEDBACK LOOPS AND RESEARCH PRODUCTION - INSIDE BRAZIL

MPB and LF produced a remarkable amount of research and data - all part of feedback loops where MPB created drafts, sought input from stakeholders, revised outputs, and advocated with key stakeholders. One of the first was a February 2015 report that captured views on the potential idea of national learning standards.⁵³

Then later, as Costin and Pontual summarize, three drafts of the standards received feedback. “Version one...had received individual feedback through the online platform and was commissioned by the Ministry, version two had received education systems’ feedback through the state seminars...Under the leadership of the National Education Council (CNE), version three would receive feedback from...unions, associations, universities, NGOs.”⁵⁴

The coalition used a range of feedback mechanisms, such as a **online platform** where teachers and parents read and commented on the standards draft. The Ministry of Education published the first version online in September 2015.⁵⁵ This platform was a key reason why MPB’s reform was sustained through different education Ministers and Presidents. As Ribeiro explains, “one enabling condition to build confidence and trust in the process was...to make sure that people would know that there was this platform...Everything was getting registered so that if the government changed...it wouldn’t be a pile of paper or emails that someone in the back of the ministry would receive and could ignore...We ended up having more than 300,000 people commenting...and...12 million contributions.”⁵⁶ The Ministry of Education hired 90 experts and a

⁵¹ Tarlau and Moeller 2020, 349.

⁵² Avelar and Ball 2019, 68.

⁵³ CENPEC and Lemann Foundation 2015.

⁵⁴ Costin and Pontual 2020, 54.

⁵⁵ Costin and Pontual 2020, 52.

⁵⁶ Ribeiro, interview 1 with author, January 10, 2022.

team from University of Brasilia to categorize the feedback, so that the whole process was transparent and visible.⁵⁷

Another channel was **public consultations**. From September 2015 to March 2016, MPB held in-person forums across every state in Brazil, open to teachers and the public.⁵⁸ NCE held other public hearings from June-September 2017 with 1,707 people.⁵⁹ For the first set of forums, anyone could share their views, for up to two minutes each. Cleuza Repulho, a consultant to MPB leading the public consultation process, says that the decision to hold these public forums was “very, very risky” because in Brazil they can turn into opportunities for opposition groups to mobilize. “We could be jeopardizing everything with the public hearings if they were to go wrong.” Protest groups did mobilize outside (the process became so politicized that these sometimes included anti-impeachment protesters). But, Repulho stresses, “**it was a turning point in the whole process...** to bring this credibility, to bring this respect.”⁶⁰ All public consultations were transcribed.

MPB supported **technical experts** such as Vanzolini Foundation to sort through and process the feedback data. As Repulho explains, “for each area of expertise, we had...experts on that area that were responsible for defining what to accept or not...based on the general rules that we had.”⁶¹

In addition to consultations with teachers and parents, MPB asked government leaders what they needed and they requested more **feedback from states and municipalities**. MPB and LF paid for Repulho and National University of Brasília to coordinate this process.⁶² Throughout summer 2016, 27 multi-day forums (one for each state) brought over 9,000⁶³ educators to discuss their feedback on the second standards draft. As a result, the Ministry received a concise collective response from all the states, instead of thousands of individual comments. Later, Maria Helena Guimarães de Castro (Executive Secretary at the Ministry of Education) arranged for a week-long meeting for states to give feedback on the final draft.⁶⁴

The Ministry of Education decided to make all changes public, to increase **transparency and buy-in** for the reform. As Costin and Pontual explain, “the writers produced a document where every single change made between the second and third versions of the BNCC were accounted for and justified based on the feedback received from CONSED and UNDIME.”⁶⁵

⁵⁷ Costin and Pontual 2020, 52.

⁵⁸ Ribeiro, interview 1 with author, January 10, 2022.

⁵⁹ Costin and Pontual 2020, 54.

⁶⁰ Repulho, interview with author, February 3, 2022.

⁶¹ Repulho, interview with author, February 3, 2022.

⁶² Costin and Pontual 2020, 52.

⁶³ Costin and Pontual 2020, 52.

⁶⁴ Petherick et al 2022, 10.

⁶⁵ Costin and Pontual 2020, 53.

MPB also hired researchers to conduct **opinion polls**, surveys, and other studies to shape the coalition’s advocacy approach and key messages. For example, they ran opinion polls with teachers and state Secretaries of Education, who wanted more clarity.

Finally, MPB now runs an online **Observatory** where stakeholders can see in real-time how the standards are being implemented across Brazil.⁶⁶ MPB still sends weekly updates to key decision-makers with data from the Observatory, so that everyone is informed about implementation.

Even though these mechanisms required extensive resources, the MPB team stresses that they were ultimately critical to the coalition’s success. As Repulho explains, it was a constant process to “build these bridges between left and right”⁶⁷ of the political spectrum. In other words, as Ribeiro asserts, “the reason why the national learning standards have been embraced by the networks of education [is] because they built it... They know why things are there. So it might not be perfect. If we would just do it like they did with the Common Core, three people in a room writing it, maybe we would get a much better technical document. But **it would be inside a drawer**.”⁶⁸ The process of feedback loops made more people support and sustain the reform.

Some scholars argue that the value of feedback loops was more to generate buy-in than substantially influence the content of reforms. As a professor of education who helped draft the standards has suggested, although thousands of people participated, “there was no systematic way for incorporating [those]... Many comments contradicted each other, which would require hard, time-consuming decisions... Because of these factors and the sheer amount of comments, in the end, most were discarded.”⁶⁹ This supports Tarlau and Moeller, who claim that “members of the *Movimento pela Base* did not necessarily believe that this process of participation improved the quality of the document. However, they certainly believed that this process was necessary to ensure **political legitimacy**.”⁷⁰

18. TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE, FEEDBACK LOOPS AND RESEARCH - OUTSIDE BRAZIL

The MPB team sought input from experts outside Brazil and hired researchers at every stage of the process. When MPB members asked for expertise, the MPB and LF teams determined how to bring them the information. They commissioned over 30 research outputs on topics such as an analysis of options for what skills the standards could include; many were lengthy reports based on hundreds of interviews. They also brought in experts, such as a 2013 seminar for MPB members to meet the primary author of the US Common Core for literacy.⁷¹ Mizne recalls, “we would always be one step ahead.”⁷²

⁶⁶ MPB 2022.

⁶⁷ Repulho, interview with author, February 3, 2022.

⁶⁸ Ribeiro, interview 2 with author, January 11, 2022.

⁶⁹ Petherick et al 2022, 10.

⁷⁰ Tarlau and Moeller 2020, 355.

⁷¹ Avelar and Ball 2019, 68.

⁷² Mizne, interview with author, October 13, 2021.

MPB hired experts to actively support the process. LF flew in an Australian expert to train the MPB team. They hired translators to write the three standards drafts in English⁷³ to allow for feedback from institutions such as the US Center for Curriculum Redesign, the UK Curriculum Foundation, and Australia’s curriculum agency.⁷⁴ They also brought in experts from Chile and Portugal to speak with MPB members about their experiences creating country-wide curriculums.

F

TRUST AND SOLIDARITY THROUGH OBSTACLES

Overview

A key factor for MPB’s success was the importance of trust in the coalition group. Trust creates solidarity so that people with diverse views are willing to collaborate towards a common goal.⁷⁵ One collective action expert stresses how important trust is, writing, “acting collectively can *create* networks... **Situations of risk, excitement, or repression create trust** among people who may not have known each other beforehand or understood they had claims in common.”⁷⁶ Trust grows “movement solidarity,” which activates commitment to a cause.⁷⁷ For MPB, interviewees reiterated the way that movement solidarity and trust sustained reforms through challenges like impeachment.

19. CONSENSUS DESPITE DIVERSE VIEWS

Interviewees stressed that consensus was critical to the coalition’s success. Even though MPB faced intense political instability since it began in 2013, it exposed diverse members to each other, and this sustained their commitment through turmoil. MPB facilitated spaces for dialogue. As Pereira suggests, “many times in this kind of processes people don’t have spaces to feel heard...Why the movement was important was to create this kind of space, where people that were very influential in the public debate had the opportunity to talk to the ones that were in charge of really writing the standards...to manifest their worries and concerns. I think that **lowered the tension in the public debate.**”⁷⁸

There was still conflict within the group, and coalition members compromised constantly. Pereira realized that for policy reforms, “it’s a **technical** and a **political** process.”⁷⁹ MPB needed to balance the needs of technical experts, alongside government leaders weighing political gains and incentives.

⁷³ Pereira, interview with author, January 6, 2022.

⁷⁴ Costin and Pontual 2020, 50.

⁷⁵ Arnold 2011.

⁷⁶ Tarrow 1994, 133.

⁷⁷ Tarrow 1994, 143.

⁷⁸ Pereira, interview with author, January 6, 2022.

⁷⁹ Pereira, interview with author, January 6, 2022.

A step that helped was that early on in the process, the MPB members “agreed on seven principles to guide the creation of the Standards.”⁸⁰ When they faced conflict, they used the principles to navigate through it and move forward. It also helped that the group was presented with research and information that helped them come to a consensus. As Crantschaninov and Segatto illustrate, “presenting evidence and concrete data helps to bridge gaps and establish a common vocabulary for the discussion of conflicting ideas.”⁸¹

Mizne was trained in participatory strategic planning, which helped bring repertoires for consensus-building into the process. As Mizne founded *Instituto Sou da Paz* in 1999 in law school, he learned the value of these methods firsthand. The Friedrich- Ebert- Stiftung Foundation trained Mizne and other Brazilian civil society leaders to use democratic decision-making. This shaped Mizne’s “belief that getting people who think differently to the table is an asset.”⁸²

MPB members also advocated based on consensus, which Pereira calls having “**multiple voices with aligned messages.**” For example, when a new Minister of Education came in, “he [or she] could have an audience and...all these 15 people from different institutions with different interests, with different connections, would talk about the standards because they were together in the mobilization...That was much more powerful than having one person speak for the cause.”⁸³ The fact that MPB had leaders from different political parties and government agencies shielded it from political turmoil. According to an LF staff member, among MPB members “there are people with greater dialogue with social movements, there are people...with other foundations, some people talk with the government, some people are government. So the mobilization is an advocacy organism...we say the same things, with different colors sometimes...Instead of having one advocacy, you have sixty...One of the strengths of the [MPB] is operating as a bloc. Even if we don’t agree in everything, **the key messages are always there being repeated for those people that matter.**”⁸⁴

20. COLLABORATING TOWARDS A SHARED GOAL

December 2015 to August 2016 was a period of tremendous instability in Brazil, especially between May 12, 2016 (when President Dilma Roussef was suspended but not yet impeached) to August 31, 2016 (impeachment). When Roussef was impeached, Temer’s administration faced pressure from evangelical groups to change the standards draft⁸⁵ before sending it to NCE for approval. The future of the entire reform was at risk, and according to Ishikawa, the coalition had “**this huge uncertainty around what would happen.**”⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Crantschaninov and Segatto 2022, 34.

⁸¹ Crantschaninov and Segatto 2022, 47.

⁸² Mizne, interview with author, October 13, 2021.

⁸³ Pereira, interview with author, January 6, 2022.

⁸⁴ Avelar and Ball 2019, 69.

⁸⁵ Petherick et al 2022, 1.

⁸⁶ Ishikawa, interview with author, January 3, 2022.

MPB members took critical steps during these months that saved the reforms. First, the week before Rousseff was suspended, MPB members published an op-ed on May 3, 2016 (in a newspaper with the second highest circulation in Brazil). This was the same day criminal charges were filed against Lula in the Supreme Court, and the day the federal Ministry of Education released the second standards draft to NCE - so that Temer could not block it. The op-ed was signed by 47 MPB members and argued that despite politics, leaders needed to protect the standards reform. According to Ribeiro, this was “a turning point because everybody will say the same thing, regardless to which party they were. So **the main message is locked**...Regardless of what happens, this process cannot stop.”⁸⁷ It is an unusual move for leaders from political parties to unite so publicly and the op-ed is a testament to the power of the MPB process.

CONSED and UNDIME also helped push the standards draft forward when it was most at risk of being thrown out. Ribeiro explains,

“They just became like lions...They were absolutely fundamental for the process to keep going despite the impeachment. They were together...when the ministry handed over the second draft of the document for the National Council of Education as a means to protect the documents from political...We didn’t know what could happen. We didn’t know who would come to the Ministry of Education...So they just made sure that it was protected somewhere else...They became the champions of the implementation. And that was really, really important.”⁸⁸

CONSED and UNDIME each nominated councilors for NCE, and they mobilized support for the standards draft to move to the next phase. Ishikawa admits, “For this policy that was so fragile at the beginning, so much resistance, **there was a chance that it was going down**...Those associations kept the work going on during this process until the new government would take charge.”⁸⁹

According to Ishikawa, this was one of the first times that states and municipalities collaborated. “This was very new for our education policy sector...They were not fighting, but they were not working together until then...Both leaderships at that moment understood their responsibility, and that they would have an opportunity to...do something major.”⁹⁰ These developments were remarkable considering the history of Brazil. After dictatorship ended in 1985, efforts to create national learning standards started but failed because they were seen as too much centralization of power in a context where most wanted more decentralization. Regardless, three decades later in 2016, states and municipalities supported a federal agenda.

The decisions to release the second draft and transition it out of the Ministry on May 3 (when Lula faced more charges), to publish a public statement, and for key allies to be present for the handover, all on the same day – these choices made it harder for Temer’s administration to stop

⁸⁷ Ribeiro, interview 1 with author, January 10, 2022.

⁸⁸ Ribeiro, interview 1 with author, January 10, 2022.

⁸⁹ Ishikawa, interview with author, January 3, 2022.

⁹⁰ Ishikawa, interview with author, January 3, 2022.

the reform. As Tarlau and Moeller suggest, “the BNCC was perhaps the **only public policy that maintained bipartisan support amidst this increasing political polarization.**”⁹¹

21. MOMENTUM TO GAIN TRACTION

There were benefits and incentives for being an MPB member, so more joined and the coalition’s influence grew. Ishikawa noticed, “it was like a snowball, so it got traction during the process...There was a lot of resistance in the beginning, but people started to understand that one, this is going to happen. Two, I want to be part of that.”⁹² As more Brazilians participated in public consultations and supported the reform, politicians had incentives to support it as well. As a professor who gave feedback on standards drafts says of LF, “they know how to use the media... **There was an aura of inevitability that they created.** This snowballing media exposure created consensus.”⁹³ This enabled the fourth and final draft of the standards to be formally published in December 2018.⁹⁴

The increased momentum was particularly visible when President Jair Bolsonaro was elected in 2018. His administration would likely be against the standards, but there was such a united front from states and municipalities that the cost of throwing them out was higher than the benefits.

22. MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

MPB’s work did not end when the standards were published in 2018. The coalition shifted into a new phase to support implementation. The coalition gathered data on reforms roll-out to expose what was going well and what needed support. Their Observatory tracked which municipalities and states had adopted the standards and which were yet to do so. MPB also provided technical support and resources to districts to help them implement; they curated free toolkits and how-to guides to implement the standards (written by other organizations) by posting these to a section of the MPB website. Ribeiro’s weekly emails to key stakeholders also provided frequent updates on the rollout of reforms.

G

LUCK WITH PREPARATION AND NETWORKS

Overview

Although orchestrators have agency over some issues, there are elements completely outside of their control. History is shaped by chance, timing, and surprise. The political scientist James Scott calls these “improvisations, missteps, and strokes of luck.”⁹⁵ People can connect at the right place at the right time due to chance. However, if orchestrators have grown a network of allies with

⁹¹ Tarlau and Moeller 2020, 356.

⁹² Ishikawa, interview with author, January 3, 2022.

⁹³ Tarlau and Moeller 2020, 351.

⁹⁴ Costin and Pontual 2020, 54.

⁹⁵ Scott 1998, 309.

relationships, trust, and solidarity, they are more likely to benefit as the environment changes and opportunities emerge. For example, a President or Minister of Education can suddenly shift and transform a coalition's capacity for influence overnight, based on the relationships that coalition members have with a new administration. MPB's case illustrates how this occurred in many critical junctures in Brazil.

23. PERSONAL VALUES

The MPB coalition emerged and persisted because a few individual leaders had a deep-seated commitment to the cause. Jorge Paulo Lemann saw the value of his own education and was inspired by peers such as Bill Gates, which made him start a foundation focused on education. Alice Ribeiro's parents are both teachers and she has a background in human rights and education activism. Mizne was an activist from a young age; born and raised in São Paulo, he feels a deep commitment to the city and to Brazil. Other MPB members and allies, such as Eduardo Deschamps, Maria Helena Guimarães de Castro, and Cesar Callegari, had experiences that caused them to deeply care about government schools.

24. TIMING AND CHOICES

A less tangible factor is the way that chance created moments that enabled MPB, outside of any one person's control. The networks among leaders also made the gains from chance more likely, as people were more likely to be in the right place at the right time. For example, MPB members or allies were suddenly appointed to high government positions, in strokes of luck that no one could have expected or planned for. Maria Helena Guimarães de Castro was at the Yale gathering and was a founding member of MPB; as State Secretary of São Paulo, she led reforms to create a common curriculum across the state.⁹⁶ When there was a new President due to Roussef's suspension (Michel Temer), Temer's administration appointed Castro as Executive Secretary (second in command at Ministry of Education). Castro had a great deal of power over the national standards reform. She made MPB a top priority⁹⁷ and co-wrote a critical op-ed.

Ishikawa believes that although the Roussef impeachment was extremely challenging for many Brazilians, it also created an opportunity. "Everything was falling apart, everywhere, and people were so disappointed. They were hardly trusting messages coming from national government and even state governments because it was so polarized...In the middle of everything that was going on...it [the reform] was a positive agenda."⁹⁸ As her words suggest, perhaps amongst the negativity of the Car Wash corruption scandal and impeachment, Brazilians wanted something positive to hope for and this helped MPB's cause. But the coalition could not have planned for or expected either development to happen.

25. INTERACTIONS

⁹⁶ Petherick et al 2022.

⁹⁷ Costin and Pontual 2020, 52.

⁹⁸ Ishikawa, interview with author, January 3, 2022.

MPB members were shaped by a network of interactions that shaped their choices. Mizne and Ribeiro knew one another from work at *Instituto Sou da Paz*, where they gained activist skills that they transferred to education reform. Manuel Palacios (who was key to generating sufficient political will) knew Castro because her agency had funded his institution. Pereira notes how Palacios has strong relationships with Secretaries of Education in most states and truly valued their wisdom. She says that he has an understanding “of the needs and the real **pains that people have on the ground**...[He says] we can’t impose this to the standards, if this is not what practice is telling us.”⁹⁹ When President Roussef appointed Palacios to be Secretary of Basic Education in 2015, Palacios drew on these relationships to guide his teams to write the standards drafts.

⁹⁹ Pereira, interview with author, January 6, 2022.

III. TOOLKIT PART 2 - ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Overview

Although much of MPB's success was due to the agency and actions of leaders involved, it must be acknowledged that it is also partly due to the specific context within which it emerged. MPB's leaders applied the methods from section one, within a context that made some aspects easier for them than if they were operating in other places. The fact that they were in a certain city (and not a rural area), in a certain country, at a certain time after a certain history had occurred - these things mattered.

For MPB, seven factors created an **environment** that enabled the coalition to succeed. These kinds of factors are harder for you to influence, but there are still steps you can take to make a stronger enabling environment more likely for your coalition to succeed. This section first offers a summary of key takeaways, then describes MPB's enabling environment in detail.

TAKEAWAYS

You will likely have less control and influence over:

- Whether a **city organically emerges** where you are located, with dense networks fostering innovation – as occurred in São Paulo. (Although you can start physical spaces and events that accelerate networks).
- Whether larger **trends cause economic growth** and resources for philanthropy or political parties to exist in your place. (Although if you are in a country with less financial resources, funders from outside your country can support local action).
- Whether norms/practices/values embedded in your country or culture promote the **value of collective action** – such as *associação*, cooperatives or *mutirão* in Brazil, and the history of strong social movements in Brazil due to resistance to Portuguese colonization and opposition to military dictatorships.
- **Whether and when certain events happen** that will offer enablers or threats to your change effort, as these are due to luck – such as how during Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, Michel Temer's administration appointed Maria Helena Guimarães de Castro to be second in command at the Ministry of Education (a core MPB member since going to Yale). (However, creating a network/orchestrator like MPB can make it more likely that chance will work in your coalition's favor).
- How **coalitions and political will inspire more coalitions and political will – like wildfire**. In Brazil, the examples of the Todos pela Educação coalition helped create an enabling environment for MPB, and MPB in turn did so for other coalitions to emerge. New coalitions include the Brazilian Creative Learning Network, Conectando Saberes Network, Arco Instituto's community of practice for youth-focused organizations, and an Imaginable

Futures-supported group for racial equity in education. If successful coalitions have occurred in your context, your coalition is more likely to succeed. However, you can gain experience and knowledge from working with or visiting effective coalitions in contexts outside your own.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT OF *MOVIMENTO PELA BASE*

A

PLACE WITH ENABLING CONDITIONS

1. CITY WITH DENSE NETWORKS

More than rural areas, **cities** have denser interaction networks and infrastructure to spread people, ideas, and innovations. Doug McAdam, Mark Beissinger, and other scholars stress the way that urbanization is a force that accelerates the emergence of social movements and revolutions.¹⁰⁰ Steven Johnson also shows how cities foster the emergence of innovations generally.¹⁰¹

São Paulo is the fourth largest city in the world, with over 22 million people. It was founded as a Jesuit mission in 1544, expanded as a hub for trade in gold, coffee, and sugar cane, and grew increasingly connected by railroads in the 1800's. The city has the largest concentration of people of Japanese descent outside of Japan, and more people of Italian descent than the city of Rome. As a result of this history, the megacity of São Paulo is an epicenter for the flow of leaders, resources, and ideas across Latin America. A dense concentration of people from across various environments interacting made the city a place that accelerates networks where innovations and social change efforts are likelier to emerge – in all sectors, including education.

2. ECONOMIC GROWTH GENERATES CAPITAL

Places with higher **economic growth** have more wealth that can potentially be used for philanthropy to education coalitions, political parties that prioritize education, and education nonprofits. As Beissinger notes, as the world urbanized, economic growth, entrepreneurship, and wealth creation also increased in certain cities.¹⁰² Certain firms and individuals earned huge profits as their investments grew. Wealth does not necessarily translate into philanthropy into education programs, but it indicates the potential for it to emerge.

Brazil experienced rapid economic growth from 2000-2012 and currently has the 9th largest economy in the world.¹⁰³ Particularly since dictatorship ended in 1985, Brazil experienced political

¹⁰⁰ McAdam 1982, 41; Beissinger 2022, 7.

¹⁰¹ Johnson 2010.

¹⁰² Beissinger 2022, 6.

¹⁰³ World Population Review 2022.

stability (under Lula, 2003-2010 and Roussef's first term, 2010-2014) and a commodity boom,¹⁰⁴ and certain individuals profited as the economy grew. For example, Jorge Paulo Lemann, a Brazilian citizen, co-founded 3G Capital (an investment firm with holdings including ownership of Heinz) and became a major shareholder in the world's largest beer company. As a result, Lemann became the 113th richest person in the world.¹⁰⁵

Lemann is one of a group of Brazilians who made their wealth from economic growth in Brazil and Latin America, many of whom live in São Paulo (although Lemann now lives in Switzerland). In addition to Lemann Foundation, São Paulo is home to other foundations started by the founders of 3G Capital, banks such as Itaú and Unibanco, and companies such as Natura. As one source explains, the city is a "hub...because it's the industrial beginning of Brazil. And so much of the money's here."¹⁰⁶ The concentration of financial resources in São Paulo is part of what made it possible for education coalitions to emerge there, because there was money to fund the organizations to grow.

3. PIPELINES OF SKILLED TALENT

Places with a higher influx of **pipelines of skilled talent** (i.e. people with higher levels of education), have more skilled leaders who can create change in any sector. For example, social movement expert Sidney Tarrow demonstrates how for the revolution in the United States, a rise in university-educated men was critical.¹⁰⁷

Brazil has mechanisms for certain students to access higher education, and these created a pipeline of talented leaders to São Paulo. Because of colonization by Portugal from 1500-1815, Brazil has ties to Jesuit missionaries, who established the first formal primary schools in Brazil in the 1500's, and elite Brazilians went to Portugal for law and other degrees. (It must be highlighted that these pipelines enabled privileged whites to access education instead of historically oppressed Black and Indigenous groups).

Brazil also has ties to US universities. Lemann studied at Harvard. He co-founded Fundação Estudar, a scholarship program, and his foundation started the Lemann Fellowship, which has funded over 700 Brazilians to study at universities like Stanford and MIT (such as Tabata Amaral, an education activist and federal deputy in São Paulo). Another leadership pipeline is Ensina Brasil, which has trained over 600 Fellows since 2015 (funded by Lemann Foundation). These pipelines feed highly educated talent back into Brazil's education reform ecosystem. Because São Paulo is home to the headquarters of most companies in Brazil and is often a regional headquarters, the majority of highly educated Brazilians move there or to Rio de Janeiro.

São Paulo's networks connect these leaders to one another, which means that it has a dense concentration of skilled talent with accelerated flows of capital, resources, and innovations. Leticia

¹⁰⁴ IMF 2018.

¹⁰⁵ As of November 9, 2022 according to [Forbes](#).

¹⁰⁶ Ricci, interview with author, February 9, 2022.

¹⁰⁷ Tarrow 1994, 74.

Lyle, an education entrepreneur and Lemann Fellow who lives in the city, stresses how powerful this is. “Being a part of the Lemann network really helps for people starting to be entrepreneurs, because now they have access to people like me who are now [in] my fifth company.”¹⁰⁸ MBA networks are key; the head of Brazil for an organization that trains Latin American leaders says that many finance leaders in Brazil went to elite MBA programs (like Stanford, Harvard, Wharton, or INSEAD), and have active alumni associations in São Paulo where entrepreneurs can easily access investors.¹⁰⁹

4. HISTORY THAT CREATES SHARED PRACTICES AND EMBEDDED VALUES

Some places have embedded practices, values, and cultural norms that foster collaboration between actors rather than individualistic competition. The impact of this factor is near-impossible to measure, but cultural norms, religions, and values likely shape whether a place becomes an enabling environment for coalitions and political will. If people have more experience ‘practicing’ the skill of working collectively, then they may apply that skill towards education reform. If a society has more forms of collective action, then perhaps it is more likely that it has more coalitions.

The MPB case has three factors that make its context different from many others. The first is that Brazil has a strong history of **collective forms of leadership**, which takes many forms under concepts such as *movimentos*, associations, and collective action. For example, Minas Gerais agricultural cooperatives started in 1889 and financial cooperatives started in 1902.¹¹⁰ In *mutirão*, Brazilians donate free labor for a collective task (such as to farm or build houses).¹¹¹ From the 1600’s, groups of enslaved Africans escaped from plantations and formed communities called *quilombos*, which were a form of collective resistance to slavery by the Portuguese colonizers.¹¹²

Brazil also has a particular form of government: coalitional presidentialism. Since 1985, Brazil has been a democracy in which presidents without single party majorities build coalitions of leaders from across multiple parties to govern. Unlike other places in the Global South where there are single-parties or a few dominant parties in power, Brazil has over 25 viable political parties.¹¹³ Perhaps since the **skill of building coalitions** and finding consensus across diverse views is such an important feature of politics in Brazil, it was more likely that a new education coalition could emerge.

Most importantly, prior to MPB, São Paulo already had a track record of education coalitions. Todos pela Educação (TPE) started in 2006 in São Paulo for education advocacy. Funded by LF, TPE led Profissão Docente (teacher policies) and Educação Já (aligns education organizations towards common agendas).¹¹⁴ Ação Educativa also led advocacy since 1994. Both organizations

¹⁰⁸ Lyle, interview with author, January 14, 2022.

¹⁰⁹ Breviglieri, interview with author, January 8, 2022.

¹¹⁰ Coop 2022.

¹¹¹ Encyclopedia.com 2020.

¹¹² Nugent and Regina 2020.

¹¹³ Petherick et al 2022, 6.

¹¹⁴ Filho, interview with author, January 13, 2022.

played critical roles alongside the MPB coalition. Alice Ribeiro worked at TPE, where she strengthened her education activism skills prior to becoming CEO of MPB. The Founder and CEO of TPE (Priscila Cruz and Olavo Nogueira Filho) are both MPB members. TPE has its own advocacy process (a cycle of media, knowledge-generation, lobbying, and monitoring)¹¹⁵ that likely influenced MPB's methods. Ação Educativa and Denise Carreira were important critics of MPB. They published a book to ensure that problems with the standards, such as a lack of focus on gender and Indigenous groups, were part of the public debate over reforms.¹¹⁶

An older example is the work of Paulo Freire, one of the world's foremost education experts and activists. He led literacy campaigns to educate farmers and workers across Brazil in the 1960's, and he was Minister of Education in São Paulo for the Workers' Party from 1989-91.¹¹⁷

The fact that Freire led large-scale education campaigns forty years earlier, that Ação Educativa existed since 1994, and that TPE existed seven years before MPB started, were all part of what made it possible for MPB to emerge, because **leaders in São Paulo had seen the power of education advocacy**. Cleuza Repulho, a MPB leader, explains how MPB was part of a larger shift towards government and civil society collaboration. She says, "it was a process of evolution...We used to work very isolated in Brazil...isolated from the public...I was part of the government. I was secretary for many years, and **I didn't have space in the third sector** in NGOs... Nowadays people are more open to working together."¹¹⁸ However, what made MPB different from previous organizations was that it intentionally brought together leaders from across political parties and civil society in order to advocate for a specific reform.

Just as MPB was influenced by prior coalitions, MPB is now influencing other coalitions. Just in the past few years, new education coalitions in São Paulo include the Brazilian Creative Learning Network, Conectando Saberes Network, Arco Instituto's community of practice for youth-focused organizations, and an Imaginable Futures-supported group for racial equity in education.

B

VISIONARY LEADERS

It is not enough that a specific geographic area contains more enabling conditions like a city, economic growth, skilled talent, and embedded practices of coalition-building. What makes a coalition possible is whether within that environment, certain leaders actually **choose** to take action on education issues. For a coalition effort to exist, it needs three types of leaders:

5. POLITICAL ENTREPRENEURS AND ACTIVISTS

¹¹⁵ Filho, interview with author, January 13, 2022.

¹¹⁶ Cassio and Catelli 2019.

¹¹⁷ Freire 1993.

¹¹⁸ Repulho, interview with author, February 3, 2022.

Certain places have historically higher levels of political entrepreneurs, activists, and social movement leaders across all sectors, which makes future coalitions and political will more likely. Alongside political entrepreneurs who try to change systems from within inside government, activists try to do so from outside government. In certain places, a pattern and legacy of social change efforts set a precedent for innovation and trained activists who could then apply their skills to impact the education sector. **The methods available in a place are shaped by the collective action that previously occurred in that place.** As Sidney Tarrow (a sociologist and expert on collective action) emphasizes, “what people *know* about how to contend in various places and at different periods of history constrains changes in the repertoire.”¹¹⁹

Brazil has long had leaders creating change inside and outside of government. Within government Brazil has examples where political leaders spearheaded large-scale education reforms, such as how in 2003, President Lula launched *Bolsa Familia* to incentivize school attendance. Brazil has a history of strong social movements pressuring government, particularly in the 1970’s and 1980’s with Catholic liberation theology activists, anti-dictatorship movements, and powerful worker’s and feminist movements.¹²⁰ More recent examples include the MST movement for agrarian reform and political consciousness education (with over 1.5 million members),¹²¹ *Ocupação 9 de Julho* and the movement for housing rights in Brazilian cities, and *O Movimento de Saude* for healthcare. São Paulo has long had protests of national importance; for example, the month-long São Paulo General Strike of 1917 included over 70,000 factory workers.¹²² It is difficult to measure, but perhaps these pervasive practices of collective mobilization make it more likely that coalitions of any kind emerge in Brazil.

Alice Ribeiro, the head of MPB, describes how “**civil society is very active in Brazil**, and it’s active mostly in education.” She saw a shift “since 2005” towards not only local and municipality or state advocacy, but also national. She pinpoints the creation of Todos pela Educação in 2006 as a key moment marking the rise of national coalitions.¹²³

6. SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

Social entrepreneurs create organizations to deliver change from outside government, through nonprofits and for-profit companies (sometimes in partnership with government). As São Paulo emerged as a hub for entrepreneurship, the city’s networks accelerated the diffusion of ideas and innovation. This toolkit argues that places with a density of social entrepreneurs across sectors are more likely to have more social entrepreneurs tackling education issues - and these are leaders with education expertise who can partner with a coalition or political leaders.

¹¹⁹ Tarrow 1994, add page #.

¹²⁰ Green et al 2019, 479.

¹²¹ Engler and Engler 2022. <https://inthesetimes.com/article/brazil-mst-landless-workers-movement>

¹²² Green et al 2019, 295.

¹²³ Ribeiro, interview 2 with author, January 11, 2022.

São Paulo is South America's hub for organizations and many global actors have their Latin America headquarters there. According to *Fast Company*, São Paulo "accounts for 30% of Brazil's high-growth businesses, while Brazil's next-largest city, Rio de Janeiro, accounts for only 8%."¹²⁴ As an indicator of the strength of Brazil's entrepreneurship ecosystem, Brazil has the largest Endeavor office among 50 offices globally.¹²⁵ Endeavor launched in 2000 to accelerate social entrepreneurs and according to Fabio Tran, a Brazilian impact investor, "they helped a lot to establish the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Brazil." He claims Brazil experienced a rise in venture capital and entrepreneurship over "the past 15 years."¹²⁶ This rise in the density of entrepreneurs in Brazil's largest city over two decades is part of why **São Paulo became a hub for innovation in all sectors, including education.**

São Paulo has schools, nonprofits, and edtech companies that train up education leader talent and incubate innovations. After launching its first site in New York, Avenues opened its second school in São Paulo in 2018. Brazilians co-founded Camino, a lab school linked to a teacher training platform. As a reflection of the growth of Brazil's edtech market, Arco (which sells learning systems to Brazilian private schools), went through a US IPO in 2018.

For Brazil's education sector, **São Paulo emerged as a place with many social entrepreneurs starting education organizations, which proved critical to the success of MPB.** For example, Comunidade Educativa Cedac started prior to 1998 and during MPB, was hired to provide support to the state and municipality associations as they gathered and collated feedback from their members. In another example, the Gradim family founded Instituto Inspirare in 2011, and the organization's Director, Anna Penido, became a key member of the MPB coalition.

7. FUNDERS

While the two factors above increase the **supply** of initiatives changing an education system, the factor of funders partially explains **demand** to pay for the growth of those initiatives. Funders provide resources to political entrepreneurs working in government, activists pressuring government, and social entrepreneurs delivering programs.

In certain places such as São Paulo, more actors were willing to pay for education reforms. Wealthy individuals created powerful foundations focused on education, and this concentration of strategic funding made it possible for education innovations and reforms in those places to test and grow. This concentration of strategic funding made it possible for education organizations and government agencies to receive more capital and technical support for their work. As Nella Van Dyke (an expert on social movements) highlights, access to funding makes social movement coalitions more likely.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Lawson 2015.

¹²⁵ Endeavor 2022.

¹²⁶ Tran, interview with author, January 6, 2022.

¹²⁷ Van Dyke 2003.

These funders could be organizations such as philanthropic foundations (deploying grants), investors (venture capital or private equity), development agencies (like FCDO), or multilaterals (like GPE). The toolkit primarily focuses on foundations because in the context of São Paulo, a foundation played a particularly important role.

Brazil has a dense funder ecosystem including the founders of 3G Group (who started foundations), along with many other foundations funded by organizations such as Itau bank and Arco Platform (which started Arco Instituto). According to the Director of a five-year-old organization that trains Latin American leaders, there are more Brazilian philanthropists focused on education than in any other Latin American country, and this is why his organization gained the most traction in Brazil (roughly 80% of their students are Brazilian).¹²⁸

Jorge Paulo Lemann started Lemann Foundation in 2002 to support education issues and leadership in Brazil (with headquarters in São Paulo). Erica Butow, the founder of a Brazilian education nonprofit, argues that LF catalyzed Brazil's education sector over the past two decades. As she explains, they “**develop the ecosystem**. If there is one foundation that is responsible for...why São Paulo, that's Lemann Foundation. They put in so much money...They did so many different things from the beginning...They started just saying, let's test it out. Let's give money...to several different entrepreneurs...Let's learn. And that's what they needed to do...It was a very recent movement in Brazil...That ecosystem was only possible because of that.”¹²⁹ In addition to Jorge Paulo Lemann, other co-founders of 3G Capital started foundations focused on education, such as Behring Foundation. As Butow notes, “most of my individual donors...they are all from somehow connected to the 3G group.”¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Breviglieri, interview with author, January 8, 2022.

¹²⁹ Butow, interview with author, January 28, 2022.

¹³⁰ Butow, interview with author, January 28, 2022.

IV. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To learn more, we recommend you read the following:

For a timeline of key events, more on the history of education policies in Brazil, and lessons learned from MPB:

Crantschaninov, Tamara Ilinsky and Catarina Ianni Segatto. “Movimento pela Base: Mobilizing Stakeholders and Ideas for the Creation of the National Learning Standards.” Lemann Foundation Social Impact Stories, August 2022.

<https://movimentopelabase.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/social-impact-stories-mpb.pdf>

For a timeline of key events and more details on the resistance from evangelical groups:

Petherick, Anna, Karthik Ramanna, and Oenone Kubie. “Education reform in Brazil: an enduring coalition?” Blavatnik School of Government Case Centre on Public Leadership, January 18, 2022. (Add hyperlink or say available by request from [insert email]).

For more details on the national standards drafting and implementation:

Costin, Claudia and Teresa Pontual. “Curriculum Reform in Brazil to Develop Skills for the Twenty-First Century.” In *Audacious Education Purposes: How Governments Transform the Goals of Education Systems*, edited by Fernando Reimers. SpringerOpen, 2020. Add hyperlink.

For more on critiques of the MPB coalition:

Tarlau, Rebecca and Kathryn Moeller (2020) ‘Philanthropizing’ consent: how a private foundation pushed through national learning standards in Brazil, *Journal of Education Policy*, 35:3, 337-366, DOI: 10.1080/02680939.2018.1560504. Add hyperlink.

Avelar, Marina and Stephen J Ball, ‘Mapping new philanthropy and the heterarchical state: The Mobilization for the National Learning Standards in Brazil’, *International Journal of Educational Development*, vol. 64 (2019), pp. 65- 73.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2017.09.007>

Cassio, Fernando and Roberto Catelli (editors). *Education is the Basis? 23 Educators Discuss BNCC*. Ação Educativa, 2019. (Available in Portuguese). Add hyperlink.

V. SOURCES

This toolkit draws from qualitative research conducted for the author's thesis for the Mphil in Politics at the University of Oxford, submitted in May 2022 (which compared MPB to the Aam Aadmi Party coalition in India). This included two weeks of in-person fieldwork and 16 interviews in Brazil, document analysis, and process tracing of case studies. It also relied on desk research and the author's expertise from co-founding [Metis](#), a coalition of education leaders in Kenya.

Interviews:

Name	Organization
Alice Ribeiro (two interviews)	Movimento pela Base
Camila Pareira	Lemann Foundation
Cleuza Repulho	Movimento pela Base
Denise Carreira	Ação Educativa
Denis Mizne	Lemann Foundation
Erica Butow	Ensina Brasil
Fabio Tran	Imaginable Futures
Juliana Gomes de Souza	Centro de Inovação para a Educação Brasileira
Juliana Gregory	Arco Educação
Julia Tami Ishikawa	Lemann Foundation
Leticia Lyle	Camino School
Nathan Rabinovitch	Network for Creative Learning
Olavo Nogueira Filho	Todos pela Educação
Paola Ricci	Avenues
Rafael Breviglieri	Latin American Leadership Academy

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