



The Lemann Foundation

strives to reduce deficiencies in Brazilian education

The Lemann Foundation is a family organization collaborating with initiatives focused on improving public education throughout Brazil, and supporting people and organizations committed to overcoming serious social challenges. In recent years, it has worked on identifying problems and participating as a venture builder in the creation of organizations that can offer solutions.

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LOCATION:

National - Brazil



MAIN PARTNERS:

Co-financers:

- Imaginable Futures
- Instituto Natura



DURATION:

2002

-now



MOTIVATION/PROBLEM TO TACKLE:

Foster quality public education and social-impact leader training.



NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORT OFFERED:

- Business model and/or strategy
- Financial management
- Knowledge and expertise transfer and exchange



SECTOR:

- Education
- Economic and social development



TYPE OF INVESTOR/ SILO:

Foundation



SDGS ADDRESSED:



FINAL BENEFICIARIES:

Public-school students throughout Brazil.



TYPE OF FINANCE:

Donation

KEY IMPACT:

Instituto Reúna, financed by the Lemann Foundation, plays a strategic role in the development of knowledge and pedagogical technical services for teaching and learning. It has four lines of action: training, didactic material, curricula, and evaluation. Moreover, it builds practical content and tools aligned with the Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC).





BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Brazil is a very large country in terms of territory, diversity, and challenges. One of the challenges is related to being among the ten most unequal countries in the world. Education is essential in order to break the permanent cycle of inequality, and Brazil has been able to make progress in access to public education. However, it now faces a major learning crisis. Low-quality public education perpetuates inequality and results in injustice.

Elementary education accounts for one of the largest deficits in this context: currently, 48% of children do not know how to read at the age of ten. Today, out of 100 children who start elementary school, 89 conclude *Ensino Fundamental I* (elementary school stage I); 78, *Ensino Fundamental II* (elementary school stage II); and only 65, *Ensino Médio* (high school) at the expected age. According to these trends, only 29.1% of students will have appropriate knowledge of the Portuguese language, and 9.1% of mathematics.

The Lemann Foundation was born in 2002 with a people-centered vision. It believes that it is through people that Brazil will succeed in overcoming its main social challenges. Thus, it has two lines of action: quality public education and leadership-development support for the solution of collective challenges.

Concerning public education, it has launched projects with teachers, school managers, secretariats of education, and governments to achieve quality and equitable learning. In terms of leadership, it supports hundreds of talents, leaders, and organizations working towards social transformation. It acts throughout the national territory and relies on a team of around 60 people.

“All we do is believe in people’s potential. By betting on people, we successfully boost the country’s transformation. This vision permeates all we do and support at the foundation.”
Aline Okada, Head of the Collaborations team at the Lemann Foundation.

This case analyzes the foundation’s venture-builder¹ approach, whereby it participates in creating solutions to overcome identified deficiencies and problems.

¹ Venture builders are organizations devoted to the creation of new businesses, which they help grow and succeed.



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DESCRIPTION

Lemann Foundation aims to develop people's potential through quality public education, offering each student learning and training opportunities for the future.

To jointly meet this challenge with the public sector, which provides education to 80% of youth enrolled in school, the foundation supports initiatives revolving around literacy, the fine-tuning of pedagogical practices and processes, and the improvement of educational network management in elementary education.

It currently collaborates with more than fifty municipal and state educational networks by supporting their management, training, and curriculum models to ensure that all children know how to read and write at the right age. Such networks account for more than two million students benefited.

The foundation also supports assessment and knowledge generation for decision-making. It promotes initiatives that contribute to the development of structuring public policies for education, such as the Base Nacional Comum Curricular, as a way to ensure the foundations of quality education for all Brazilian children.

Regarding leadership, the Lemann Foundation also aims to attract and invest in people committed to making a difference in multiple social issues: education, healthcare, public administration, sustainability, and security. For this, it follows three courses of action.

The first is to invest in training people and to enhance the appeal and competitiveness of social-impact careers. The second is to create more opportunities for action, that is, to increase the number of spaces or to improve existing entry processes; it also contributes to strengthening social-impact organizations. The third is to strengthen the ecosystem by bringing together the elements of a favorable administrative, economic, and legal environment in the public sector to leverage people's actions.

The foundation has supported and encouraged other social-impact organizations from the outset, which promoted its evolution from being a contributor to projects through donations to consolidating



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as a social-impact facilitator, acting as financier and manager of a portfolio comprised of strategic organizations in order to effect the social transformation that the country needs.

“Some years ago, we understood that our role, in addition to donations, was to support and guide the return achieved through the resources and support provided. This also entails investing resources and efforts in fundraising and capacity building for supported organizations so that they can grow, enhance their impact, and ensure their sustainability.”
Aline Okada.

Moreover, the Lemann Foundation has identified significant transformation gaps in areas where there is no clear, defined leadership operating. This motivated the foundation to act as a venture builder and look for ways to create and/or support solutions that bridged those gaps. It first produced solutions that helped identify and support an existing organization so that it could respond to a new challenge, incubate an idea, replicate an existing program, or even support the creation of a new organization separate from the foundation.

An emblematic example is **Instituto Reúna**, born in 2019. Given that the Base Nacional Comum Curricular had been approved by the Conselho Nacional de Educação (National Council of Education) in 2017, the foundation knew that the implementation of its guidelines and parameters throughout Brazil would be vital. Said implementation concerns various aspects, such as the suitability of school material, curricula, school management, and teacher training.

The Lemann Foundation understood that the most appropriate solution would be to support the creation of a new organization as there were none that worked on that issue. That is how Instituto Reúna emerged, conceived and financed in collaboration with Imaginable Futures² with the purpose of increasing knowledge and expanding technological pedagogical services for teaching and learning, and contributing to the coherence of the educational system.

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² Philanthropic investment fund for education by Omidyar Group (<https://www.imaginablefutures.com/>)



IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the venture-builder model follows three essential stages:

- 1 Identifying the problem and reading the situation: detailed analysis and understanding of the problem to address;
- 2 Making an external comparative analysis: active research on organizations working to tackle that problem in other countries;
- 3 Structuring and implementing the best solution, which may be identifying and supporting an existing organization, incubating an idea within the foundation, forming a subsidiary, or establishing a new organization.

In cases where no organization focusing on the gaps identified exists, the foundation searches for people to lead the structuring and implementation of a new organization, helps look for co-financers, and supports the initial structuring of the organization.



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In the case of Instituto Reúna, the foundation noticed that one of the challenges for the implementation of the BNCC would be creating technical pedagogical content and tools and providing support and guidance to secretariats and governments. The possibility of conceiving a solution to this challenge became apparent.

The foundation then looked for international examples of organizations that acted through similar proposals and found Student Achievement Partners (SAP) in the United States. This example was a source of inspiration and supported the structuring process of Instituto Reúna's business model.

For its implementation—considering that the organization still did not exist—the foundation searched for a leader with the skills and expertise to drive and guide the initiative from scratch, someone responsible and highly capable of navigating the landscape of educators and becoming a leader in the sector.



Tailored Finance

In the venture-builder model, the value contributed is defined based on the scope of the proposal. The foundation always makes investments through donations, even when supporting companies' projects.

Instituto Reúna, created in 2019, is mainly financed by the Lemann Foundation. Its support is calculated according to annual maintenance costs and the cost of projects that ensure the achievement of the foundation's strategic objectives.

The foundation also promotes networking with potential financiers, thus encouraging financial sustainability. In this particular case, the foundation introduced Instituto Reúna to Imaginable Futures, which became a co-investor.



Non-financial Support

Non-financial support includes:

- ... Transfer of the foundation's knowledge and expertise in identified deficiencies, together with mapped and systematized comparative analyses;
- ... Support in structuring the organization and the business model and selecting the team by sharing contacts and knowledge;
- ... Connection with potential co-financers aligned with the initiative.

In the case of Reúna, after its structuring, the foundation provided guidance in three dimensions:

- ... The Institutional Development team contributed to the creation of its institutional management structure (financial, administrative, and human resources), the reports for the foundation's Board of Directors, and compliance management (such as the formulation of its code of conduct, which is the same that the foundation follows).



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- ... The Educational Policies team provides biweekly follow-up to support in achieving internal goals and ensuring quality is delivered by aligning the team's main strategies.
- ... The Collaborations team promotes capacity building since the business-model structuring stage, during short- and mid-term strategic planning, and in the revision of its theory of change.



RESULTS

Instituto Reúna has played a strategic role in the development of knowledge and technical pedagogical services for teaching and learning on four fronts: training, didactic material, curricula, and evaluation. It has achieved this by building tools and practical content in line with the BNCC, bringing together the best of national and international expertise, and leveraging a network of collaborators to transform education.

Some of its main achievements to date are:

- ... The creation of BNCC's *mapas de foco* (focus maps)— prioritized as a result of the pandemic—a tool that helps prioritize learning with a focus on comprehensive development and clarity regarding skill progress in elementary education;
- ... The development of tools called *matrizes curriculares* (curricular matrix) for the creation of secondary-education curricula aligned with the BNCC—developed in collaboration with Fundação Roberto Marinho;
- ... Teacher-training plans in line with the BNCC;
- ... Active participation in the Skills for Prosperity program, which seeks to promote socio-economic growth by improving English-language teaching, in cooperation with the British government and Associação Nova Escola.



LEARNINGS AND PERSPECTIVES

The foundation noticed that the leadership selection and defining process must be carefully and patiently conducted, focusing on the real demands and expectations placed on the initiative, such as a commitment to producing a relevant solution for the ecosystem. This is important for the organization's impact-generating capacity.

"Leadership selection is fundamental in this process—bringing someone with an entrepreneurial profile who is able to contribute their vision and build the organization's strategy from scratch."
Aline Okada.

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When the organization undergoes structuring, having many co-financers may slow the process down as it entails reconciling the perspectives of many parties. At this stage, it is essential to rigorously identify a candidate that could build the vision and mission of the solution and support the structuring process of the project. Once the organization has been established, it is this leader's role to define a fundraising strategy to attract new financiers.

The supported organization must be truly committed to any non-financial support provided. For this, the foundation has come up with a commitment agreement whereby the leadership commits to participating, devoting time, and actively engaging in the support received. This way, the capacity-building process is jointly conducted with the organization's leadership around structuring and strategic aspects for the internal training of the organization. This will enable it to be more prepared to reach its impact goals.