

Jumping into the waves of the river

A case study of the Pact for Education in Pará, Brazil



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INNER WORK *for*
SOCIAL CHANGE



Fetzer Institute



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The Inner Work for Social Change Project

Synergos and the Fetzer Institute began the project on Inner Work for Social Change in 2018 to demonstrate how Inner Work and Bridging Leadership can make social action towards a better world more effective. Through six commissioned case studies and in dialogue with thought leaders, development practitioners, activists, and others, the project aims to spark a global conversation on how reflective practices can make social action more aware, more ethically attuned, and more sustainable.



Within the project, *inner work* is any form of reflective practice that increases awareness of self, others, and the systems in which complex social problems arise. Inner work is core to *bridging leadership*, which is the capacity and will to build trust and tap the fullest contributions of diverse stakeholders, helping them to come together across divides to work in concert for the common good.

About this case study

In portraying the Pact for Education in Pará, we focus on Bridging Leadership, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and collaboration, the central features of the Pact’s approach. Although the project did not include inner work in its design, the experience of participating in the Pact was personally transformative for several key stakeholders.

We depict the story of the Pact in two ways: in broad brush strokes at the state level and in richer detail and depth for one city, Ulianópolis. Document analysis, site visits, conversations, and in-depth interviews with key players provided the content for the case study.



Photo: Sidney Oliveira

Preface

In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation.¹

Paulo Freire

In the first decades of the 2000s, the Brazilian state of Pará had some of the country's worst performance outcomes in education. In 2012, the average time spent at school

was only 5.9 years – below the national average of 7.2 years. Worse still, only 30% of young people finished high school.²

At the same time, the private sector faced a shortage of skilled labor to meet the needs of an expanding market. In addition to being an obstacle to economic expansion, this situation posed a threat to the new generations of *paraenses*³ eager to enjoy the positive economic cycle and escape the cycle of poverty.

In 2012, Synergos (a global nonprofit organization that brings people together to solve complex problems) identified an opportunity to address the challenge to improve education in the state of Pará. The trigger was the possibility of a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), with which the Pará state government was negotiating a US\$350 million education loan.

Those initial conversations led to the launch of a multisectoral partnership, Pacto pela Educação do Pará (the Pact for Education in Pará). The Pact's approach was based on a systemic vision and collaboration among different actors, through multisectoral partnerships involving relevant state and municipal government departments, as well as other elements of society such as private sector, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), multilateral organizations, teachers, parents, and students.

The initial results of the Pact in terms of improving education in Pará were good, but the challenges of working in partnership soon appeared. As this case study shows, the Pact's regional, state-level efforts opened space for the emergence of bridging leaders in more local, municipal experiences that consolidated successful collaborative initiatives.



Synergos photo

Introduction

Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation.⁴

Nelson Mandela

In Brazil, it is often said, especially among the poorest families, that there is no way to win in life that does not go through education.

I am the fruit of this vision. I was born in Rio de Janeiro, from a poor family. My father was a bricklayer. My mother did various odd jobs, such as dressmaking and cake-making, to contribute to the family's income. She was the one who tried hardest for their children to continue studying. She made sure that the children's school clothes were always clean, that there was enough money left to buy school supplies. She was the one present at all school meetings.

Because of her efforts, I completed all my studies, including university, in public establishments. Along with all my friends who studied with me, through public education we were able to build life trajectories that allowed us to advance economically beyond our parents.

When I did my initial studies, in the late 1970s, Brazil was still under the military dictatorship that controlled the country for 25 years, between 1964 and 1988. By that time, education was compulsory only in its basic cycle, from the first to the eighth year of study. At that time, about 80% of children between seven and 14 years old were enrolled in schools. The proportion among adolescents aged 15 to 17 years was even worse, with 60% enrollment. High school was not compulsory yet.⁵

The situation improved significantly after the dictatorship ended, when the promulgation of the new Constitution guaranteed universal and compulsory access to education at the primary and secondary levels.

Brazilian Constitution Article 205 establishes this principle:

Education, the right of all and the duty of the State and the family, will be promoted and encouraged with the collaboration of society, aiming at the full development of the person, his preparation for the exercise of citizenship and his qualification for work.⁶



Now, access to basic education for children and young people is universal, resulting in 96% enrollment. There are more than 48 million students,⁷ served by about 2.2 million teachers in more than 184,000 schools, 78% of them belonging to the public school system.⁸

However, having access to school is not the same as having access to a quality education that meets all the requirements established by the Brazilian Constitution. In a national poll, half the teachers interviewed said they would not recommend the profession. Among the reasons they cited were the low quality of teacher training, poor school infrastructure, and low wages. A third of the teachers interviewed did other jobs to supplement their income.⁹

Research shows that each year of study in Brazil represents an increase of up to 15% in the average wage value.¹⁰ Therefore, not progressing in their studies can significantly jeopardize the prospects of young people when they enter the labor market. The impact of a poor educational system was particularly felt during the period when Brazil experienced high economic growth, between 2004 and 2012. During that period, many sectors of the Brazilian economy suffered from a lack of skilled labor to meet growing demand.¹¹

When we look at the state of Pará, the second largest of the federation, with an area equivalent to Peru, we see that the promise of education as a transforming element in the lives of people, especially the poorest, is still far from being fulfilled. Pará has had historically very poor education outcomes. In 2012, more than 70% of the state's young people had their plans to enter the labor market in better-paid jobs frustrated because they had failed to complete high school.¹²

This untenable situation not only destroyed the dreams of young people and their families to escape the cycle of poverty, but also served as a brake on the development of the state. Pará was, at the time, in a moment of economic growth but suffered from a lack of skilled labor.

The sense of urgency helped create the conditions for the emergence of partnerships involving the state government, various municipalities, businesses, civil society organizations, teachers, parents, and students. The resulting Pact for Education in Pará (Pact) aimed to lead the state to make a qualitative leap in education through a collaborative approach.

The purpose of this case study is to portray the Pact and its innovative approach to addressing the complex challenges of education.

The main novelty of the Pact was to conceive and implement a complex solution to the complex challenge that is education. The complexity came from bringing to the table actors who did not usually act together, such as public, private, and civil society organizations. Although it sounds obvious, this was not common practice in many places in Brazil.

In Pará, as in all of Brazil, processes linked to a political group in power tend to be unstable and dependent on changing political flows and disputes of the moment. When the party in power is defeated, the new occupants tend to dismantle ongoing initiatives to set up and deploy their own.

The Pact for Education, in its first phase, between 2012 and 2015, obtained positive results, with a widespread improvement in education results. However, in its second phase, after 2016, the Pact failed to replicate the results achieved previously. Elections

to the state government, held in 2018, brought to power a political group opposed to what had originally established the Pact. As a result, the initiative was halted.

In this case study, I first look at how the Pact for Education was developed at the state level, with particular attention to the process of forging multisectoral partnerships. I then use a magnifying glass to examine this process from a specific experience: the city of Ulianópolis, located about 400 kilometers from the state capital, Belém.

An understanding of the elements that helped the Pact achieve great results in the city could serve as a reference for similar experiences not only in Brazil but also in the rest of the world.¹³



The official launch of the Pact for Education.

Diving into the river: The Pact for Education in Pará

*To educate oneself is to impregnate with meaning every moment of life, every daily act.*¹⁴

Paulo Freire

Banzeiro is an expression widely used in the state of Pará. It describes the small waves provoked in the river by the passage of great vessels. Children who live in riverside areas have a habit of floating on the ripples caused each time a boat passes by.

A variation of the word is the verb *embanzeirar*, which can be understood as “surpassing the limits.” This analogy can easily be transposed to education, which



should have the capacity to help people to *embanzeirar*, to overcome the limits imposed on them by their social, economic, and cultural conditions.

As the Brazilian educator Antonio Carlos Gomes da Costa said:

*To educate ... is to create spaces so that the learner can undertake the construction of his own being, that is, the realization of his potentialities in personal and social terms ... The learner, within this vision, comes to be seen not as a recipient, but as an authentic source of initiative, commitment and freedom.*¹⁵

Imagine a family living in a community by a river on the outskirts of the state, far from urban centers in the interior of Pará. They have precarious access – or no access – to basic services, such as health and education. The children of this family are of school-going age and their parents’ dream, of course, is to send them to school.

But the school, when it exists, is far away. Often, these children face other difficulties and risks, such as sexual harassment on the way to class, lack of teachers, and a precarious structure, with poorly equipped classrooms and a shortage of supplies or adequate food.

This family is financially insecure and so needs the children to contribute to the family income. Because of this, the children will have great difficulty in learning and, at some point, will drop out of school.

This fictional description reflects a reality that is common to many families not only in the state of Pará, but also in many other regions of the country. In the case of Pará, the situation is further complicated by the precarious infrastructure of transportation and communication linking its 144 municipalities and the countless communities outside the urban centers.

Synergos photo

Wealth and Violence

The name Pará is of indigenous origin and means something like “river” or “big river.” This is understandable, since the state has more than 20,000 kilometers of river. About 70 municipalities border water, including lakes and canals, so they depend on them for the development of their economy and for the transport of people and goods.¹⁶

The richness of biodiversity makes this region unique and special to humankind, but it is also a source of many conflicts over land tenure and the right to exploit its natural resources. Throughout history, the state of Pará has been the scene of several flows of economic exploitation that have had a marked effect on political life and social structures.

Crop husbandry and cattle farming were the initial economic axes, followed in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries by the exploitation of latex, an essential material for the industrial revolution and the emergence of the motor vehicle. By then, the region had experienced an economic boom, the memory of which is still visible today in the remaining Art Nouveau buildings of the time, especially in Belém, the state capital.

The boom depended on the exploitation of seringueiros (rubber tappers) to extract latex from the rubber trees. Most of them were brought in from the northeastern region of Brazil, where the climatic and geographical conditions are totally different from those of the Amazon. The majority of the seringueiros were subjected to a regime of semi-slavery in which they were permanently dependent on, and indebted to, the contractors.

The Brazilian journalist and writer, Euclides da Cunha, described the condition of the rubber tappers on a trip to the Amazon region in the early 20th century, still at the height of the rubber cycle:

*In the exuberant landscapes, the seringueiro faces the most criminal work organization ever created by the most shameless selfishness. In fact, the seringueiro ... performs a tremendous anomaly: he works to enslave himself.*¹⁷

But the golden cycle of latex exploitation came to an end, accelerated by the smuggling of rubber tree seedlings to Asia, which allowed England to control this market. The economy entered a long period of stagnation, leaving rubber tappers and their families in a state of acute poverty.

Despite this, in the 1920s, Henry Ford launched a utopian project in the Pará forest, a city called Fordlandia, entirely geared to the industrial production of latex. The dream of economic development in an industrial rhythm lasted 17 years until countless obstacles and bad judgment defeated it.¹⁸

A new great impulse for the Pará economy came with the dictatorship that ruled Brazil between 1964 and 1988. The military government promoted the occupation



What remains of the water tower and main warehouse building in Fordlandia, Brazil.

of the Amazon region and the exploitation of its natural resources. This began a new economic cycle, based primarily on the extraction of ores, chiefly iron and gold.

During this period, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, the legal and illegal exploitation of wood intensified. Based largely on illegal access to land, this exploitation coincided with an increase in violence against local populations and indigenous communities. The loss of forest cover due to illegal deforestation opened space for cattle ranching and, more recently, for expanding the agricultural frontier from the central region of Brazil, primarily for soybean cultivation.

Those elements together exert enormous economic pressure on the state, with direct social and political consequences, and increased conflicts and violence. Journalists and environmental and human rights activists are constantly being threatened, and some have been murdered.

In the early 2000s, thanks to the global commodity boom, Pará's economy experienced strong growth. The state of Pará is considered one of the largest mineral reserves on the planet. Iron ore comprises about 75% of its exports and wood 13%, mainly to the Asian market.

The journalist and researcher Lucio Flavio, at times threatened for his critical opinion regarding the development of Pará and the Amazon region, expresses his view on the exploitation of raw materials:

This model, because it is frankly colonial, will crystallize unfavorable exchange relations to the Amazon and make it dangerously dependent on China and a select group of countries that buy the raw materials of the region. The wood extractivism of the past was replaced by hegemonic mineral extraction, with heavy applications of technology and capital, as well as an increasing influence on government and society.¹⁹

The fact is that the economic growth generated by the boom in commodities and by other policies aimed to promote the economy of Pará provoked an increase in demand for qualified professionals from the local market.

A 2007 article from Portal da Mineração (Mining Portal), which covers the sector in Brazil, lamented the lack of skilled labor in the Amazon region to meet the expected increase in demand for minerals. The article pointed out that with “the expectation of Paraense mining to double its production to more than US\$14 billion by 2010, the problem of the lack of labor for the sector becomes even more alarming”.²⁰

This contributed to exposing a situation that was already known but that had become critical: the weak educational system of Pará. The poor quality of education directly affected the state's capacity for sustainable development and for dealing with persistent poverty and violence.

A fresh look at education

In Pará, the Pact for Education initiated an innovative approach to improve the quality of education. At the Pact's heart was the idea that solving complex social problems requires collaboration among diverse sectors of society.

Wanda Engel Aduan, former director of Synergos in Brazil and responsible for the Pact's conception and implementation, explains that collaboration implies that each actor participates in constructing a common agenda. She points out that at the time of the beginning of the Pact, around 2012, there were no in-depth studies in Brazil on systemic collaborative processes such as the multisectoral partnerships.

I have been a teacher all my life and am convinced that the problems of education are not solved only in education. There is a limit and you have to break this limit. It is necessary to join the different social actors, beginning by the government in all its spheres. Because, for instance, it is not possible to consider issues such as school dropout, which is drawn by the poorest children and young people, without involving government's social assistance sector. Beyond that, it's fundamental involving civil society, opinion makers, companies, and universities. Is it difficult? For sure, it is! But this is the path of multisector partnerships.²¹

Therefore, the Synergos Institute implemented a collaborative approach that recognized the importance of personal transformation (Inner Work) associated with systemic thinking and trust-building. Other key elements were conflict management processes and strengthening new types of leadership in which leaders encourage collaboration and are able to build bridges across diverse groups. Finally, Synergos supported engaging forms of communication and organizational learning processes.²²

In implementing the Pact, it was strategic to establish initial enabling conditions and a shared understanding of the context in which the process would be carried out. As enabling conditions, partners needed to recognize the seriousness and urgency of the problem, and to accept the possibility of facing it and positively transforming social reality.

Another essential element was the predisposition of the actors involved, especially those holding public power, to work in partnership. A vital factor was to have available funds, either from the government or private partners, to enable organizations to implement commonly agreed programs and establish a basic level of trust among partners.

It was also necessary to have a team dedicated to designing, structuring, and coordinating the operation of the Pact. In this sense, Synergos provided the innovation, bringing its global experience of implementing similar processes in other contexts. Synergos allocated a program team, which worked in close partnership with the state government. At the same time, the team was able to keep its independence, since its operational resources came from private partners, companies, and foundations that engaged in and supported the proposed Pact.

As a backbone organization, Synergos developed a common agenda and facilitated the mobilization and motivation of the various partners. It also initiated decentralized governance and collaborative management of program results. Other responsibilities included managing communication, strengthening the common identity of the Pact, and recognizing the various partners.²³

This was a complex arrangement, consistent with the complexity of the challenge. It implied, above all, a change in traditional ways of acting, especially of the public power-holders. In the case of education, for the government it meant bringing other nontraditional actors to the planning table and understanding the potential – and challenges – of working collaboratively with companies, universities, and civil social organizations.

Walter Bernardo Cardoso da Cruz, manager of USE 10, one of the units of the Pará State Secretary of Education, which manages 22 schools, has an acute understanding of why this type of partnership is important. He says:

Marituba, one of the five municipalities that make up the metropolitan region of Belém, is a poor municipality with a high rate of violence. This violence comes mainly from drug trafficking and lack of opportunity in the labor market, resulting from a poor education. Talking to the Marituba Municipal Secretary of Education, I was asked what companies get from their participation in the Education Pact. I ask this: who is the bank manager there today? Who is the Secretary of Education? Who is the Secretary of Health? Who are the people occupying the senior positions within the Municipality of Marituba? Is it that poor boy from the lower neighborhood who studied and graduated? And who is the bank manager today? Of course not! ... If the bank invests in education to help improve the quality of education of those children, this “brat”; instead of stealing from the bank tomorrow, he will be the bank manager, he will be the bank teller, understand?²⁴

Education, despite everything

It was Walter Cardoso himself who accompanied me on a visit to the Fé em Deus School, one of the schools that adhered to the Pact, located on the periphery of Belém, the capital of Pará.

The school serves a densely populated, very poor and violent region. It has deficient infrastructure where children do not have enough space for their meals or to practice

sports and leisure. Even so, Fé em Deus experiences a strong demand from parents to enroll their children – a lively example of how coordinated action involving teachers, community, and public agents can help minimize the effects of poor structure.

The journey to the school was longer than I thought. From the center of Belém, where I was staying, to the unit of the Secretary of Education where Walter worked on the outskirts of the city and from there to the school, the way took me through the various stages of economic development in the city. On the long avenue the taxi followed, I saw a profusion of cars, houses in different stages of construction, and people – many people – in the street. The sky prepared for another day of the heavy rains that are a feature of the Amazon region.

Walter took me in his car in the rain. On the way, he showed me the unfinished rapid transport system which, when finished, could improve the quality of life of Belém's residents. For the time being, that part of the system remained in the pipeline, and it even carried risks, since poor signage made it hazardous for people who needed to cross the street. Walter commented:

I have already complained and referred several offices to the Urban Mobility Company, as well as to the Mayor of Belém, requesting the revitalization of speed reducers in front of schools, as children, youth and adults need to cross the busy avenue and there is no traffic light or pedestrian signs in front of the three schools.²⁵

At one point, he turned the car into an inner street and stopped in front of a wall that looked like it would collapse at any moment.

See? We must try to resolve this urgently. I have already requested the renovation of this school wall to the competent department, but until this moment we have got no response. The School Council has been organizing to solve the problem, but to this day they have not been able to release the resources.²⁶

The security man came to open the school gate so we could enter. To the right was an open area, which served as a recreational space for the children when it was not



Photo: Renato Guimaraes

From left to right: Nazareno Lobato, Rubens de Aquino Oliveira, Walter Bernardo Cardoso da Cruz and Wania Cantañede

raining. At the front were some classrooms. To the left, a few more classrooms, the kitchen, the administration office, and the teachers' room.

The children looked at us with natural curiosity. Dressed in their uniforms, all of them were very polite and greeted us as we passed. Walter led me through the administration office – a space crammed with employees, filing cabinets, and boxes of materials.

In the boardroom, three people were waiting for us: Wania Claudia de Souza Cantañede (the principal), Rubens de Aquino Oliveira (science and biology teacher), and Nazareno Lobato (the grandfather of two children enrolled at the school).

What followed was almost two hours of conversation that helped me to understand how a school with such poor infrastructure could still attract the respect of parents and students. The answer is less complicated than it might seem. The essence lies in the collaborative work between the school staff, the students, and their parents and relatives.

In practice, this began with a change in the school's power structure, when a new team took over in 2015. Wania Cantañede was then deputy director, responsible for overseeing the school's night classes. She was disturbed by the low turnout of parents and students in the daily life of the school and by some teachers' lack of commitment.

This prompted her to run for election for principal, along with a team of teachers who shared her views. Once elected, Wania and her team sought ways to engage parents and students in problem management and solutions. This attitude was in line with the spirit of the Pact for Education of generating opportunities for collaboration and bringing the community into the school.

A major challenge was to enlist the community to help solve the most serious problems of the school structure. The first step was to reactivate and energize the school council, which brings together representatives of teachers, students, and parents, so that decisions are taken collectively and in a more participatory manner.

As Wania says:

We call the community to help decide what to do and also to get their "hands dirty." Change lamps, paint the rooms, install air conditioning, fix the ceiling. Even the teachers themselves do this service. So, I do, they do, we work together, we're very united. I do not take decisions alone. Anything that I have to decide I call this group (the council) and we decide what we are going to do. The ultimate goal is always to seek quality in education.²⁷

The results, according to Wania, soon began to be perceived, with an increase in the demand for places in the school by parents and students, to the point where some

Measuring the quality of education

Since 2007, Brazil has implemented the IDEB (Basic Education Development Index), an indicator developed to measure the quality level of education. It is a tool used in the diagnosis of educational reality, acting as a guideline for public policies in setting goals for improving education.

The IDEB considers two important components regarding the quality of education: the school flow (promotion, grade retention, school evasion) obtained annually through the School Census; and the performance achieved by the students in annual national assessments. The combination of these two factors results in a grade ranging from 0 to 10. The index is calculated for three stages of education: the fifth and ninth grades of elementary school and the third grade of high school. The data is processed by the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research (INEP), an agency connected to the Brazilian Ministry of Education in charge of evaluating educational systems and the quality of education in Brazil. The INEP releases IDEB results every two years.

parents slept in the queue for registration outside the school to guarantee a limited place. Wania recognizes that there is more to be done, especially to improve the ranking of the school in the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB).

Other infrastructure problems remain, such as the absence of a cafeteria and a sports field.

And what has been changing internally for the participants of this collaborative process at the school?

Nazareno Lobato, who has two grandchildren studying at school, has always been a participant in school life but feels encouraged to participate even more as he sees how the community is responding and the results are being achieved through this collaboration:

I find it very important to call the parents of the students to the school. I know that there are many schools with difficulties and in some of them, the directors do not let the parents come in to help. There's only a meeting at the beginning of the year, and that's it. It cannot be like this, just a group managing. It has to be several people united by the same goal. If I see something wrong, I have to get the student's attention, for example. It is a way of contributing; the teachers, the same thing, the porter the same thing, the one in charge of the food as well. We are one school together.²⁸

Rubens de Aquino Oliveira, a science and biology teacher, has long believed collaboration is fundamental to generate long-term transformation. He was one of



Children at Fé em Deus School

the first to join Principal Wania Cantañede's call to change the school. Joining this change effort deepened his vision of the teacher's role:

With the Pact for Education, there were some official activities to mobilize the school community. But they were isolated and often did not stand for time. With the strengthening of the school council, we have achieved much greater community support. The council meetings are open; everyone can give their opinion so that the members can take a better-informed decision. This gives us greater support. Meetings happen on weekends, when parents can attend, and nowadays there is no room to accommodate everyone who comes.²⁹

Wania Cantañede says her professional performance as school leader was consolidated from the moment she came to lead this process. She believes that leadership has a key role to play in setting an example for the whole team, so she makes a point of being fully dedicated to the school. In her openness to talking directly to the community, she acts as a bridging leader. Another direct consequence is that she has been invited to assume a similar role in the municipal public network, where she is also a teacher, which would limit her ability to continue as director of Fé em Deus school.

But I said to myself that I had to continue working on Fé em Deus School. The school is rising, improving every day, but there is still a lot of work to be done together with the community.³⁰

Working in partnership

The way in which the staff of Fé em Deus has been able to implement a collaborative and participatory process, despite poor infrastructure and a lack of resources, shows the potential of the Pact approach, which also involved great difficulties. Major challenges include changing paradigms and mobilizing key sectors to collaborate actively and incorporate partnership in their ways of working.

Ana Claudia Hage is a former secretary of education of Pará. She was deeply involved with the Pact and describes her vision of the role of government in the process:

The Pact, for me, started from a position of the state government calling society to contribute to the improvement of education. We assumed that the state alone would not be able to transform education. So, the need to call the community. That helps the state to fulfill its role, which is to understand education as a whole, not divided by the spheres, from municipal, state, to federal. We had to call everyone. That call did not bring an obligation of participation, but brought the conviction of importance. The partner had to understand that it was very important to participate.³¹

The design and launch of the Pact involved a collaborative effort of representatives of the state government and a group of corporations, foundations, and NGOs united under the Pact's Partner Organizations Group. This group defined one single goal for the Pact: to increase by 30% the Pará position in the IDEB ranking, up to the year 2017.

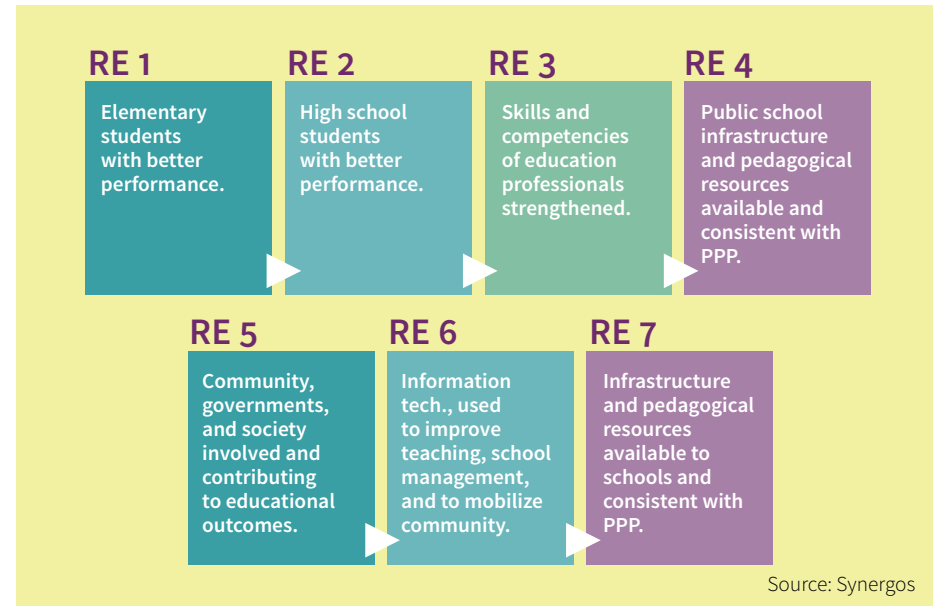
The reason for having only one major goal was to facilitate the communication and understanding of the Pact's proposal. The Group established seven key results (or performance indicators) for accomplishing the goal.

The Pact faced several obstacles to achieve those results. There was a need to mobilize and involve the various actors, in the various spheres, from the state government to teachers, parents, and students in schools. The geography of Pará, with its enormous distances and poor transport infrastructure in several places, presented another challenge. There were difficulties, too, in establishing fluid communication among so many actors, sectors, and instances.

Other challenges included constant changes in public administration, which resulted in no fewer than five secretaries of education during the period in which the Pact was active. Disputed electoral processes and teacher strikes added to the difficulties. So, too, did the exit of private partners, with a consequent decrease in financial resources.

Nevertheless, the results of the first phase of the Pact for Education, between 2013 and 2015, demonstrate the positive outcomes of these multisectoral partnerships

Figure 1: The Pact's seven key expected results

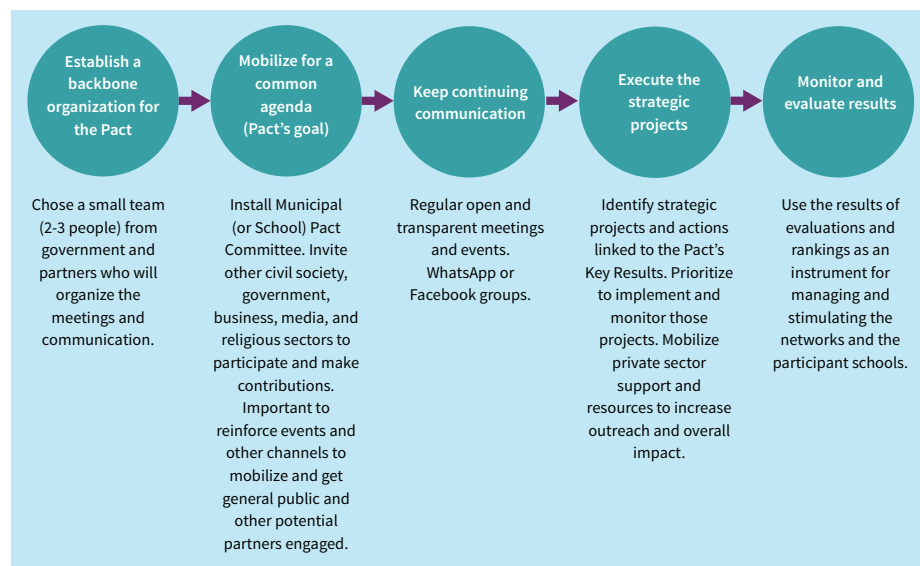


to improve education. Pará increased its IDEB ranking in all sectors, obtaining the second highest gain in the country at the high school level. It also increased the educational attainment of the population from 7.2 to 9.1 years, as well as increasing the percentage of young high school graduates from 30 to 40.2%.³²

The Synergos Institute concluded:

The results of the IDEB 2015 seemed to demonstrate that when there is a mobilization around common goals; when the efforts of education professionals, students, family members, entrepreneurs and society are integrated; after all, when you all gather around the same dream, that dream becomes achievable.³³

Figure 2: Roadmap to implement the Pact at school level



By 2015, the Partner Organizations Group made a strategic decision to focus on municipalities that were willing to act more systemically and to deepen the Pact's premises. These were the pilot municipalities of the Pact. Adhesion to the Pact was formalized by a memorandum of understanding signed by the mayor, a representative of the state government, and a representative of a partner company.

Of the 144 municipalities in Pará, initially 18 adhered to the Pact in 2015. In 2016, 22 new cities joined, bringing the pilot municipalities to 40. These cities served as a proof of concept; they demonstrated both the feasibility of implementing the Pact's proposals and the positive effects on education.

The impact of the pilot municipalities' initiative became clear as the good results obtained in the period 2013–2015 did not recur in the following years. The 2017 edition of the IDEB showed poor results for the whole of Brazil. Performance results for Pará reflected a stagnation in education. Pilot municipalities received closer support from the Synergos team to mobilize their local communities. Partner organizations played a

key role in mobilizing their peers, in order to bring other partners that were more clearly identified with local demands.

In 2016, through a joint agreement, the government of the state of Pará succeeded Synergos in the role of backbone organization of the Pact. With this, the challenges of leading multisectoral partnership processes became more evident. The Pará secretary of education did not yet have full capacity to assume this responsibility.³⁴ This was allied to the state's political dynamics, in which antagonistic groups of the government of the time were already preparing for the electoral dispute that was to come in 2018. The roots of the dispute were deep and had affected the Pact in earlier years as well.

The impact of the pilot municipalities' initiative became clear as the good results obtained in the period 2013–2015 did not recur in the following years. The 2017 edition of the IDEB showed poor results for the whole of Brazil. Performance results for Pará reflected a stagnation in education.

However, the results for the 40 cities that had adhered to the Pact were better on average than those of non-adherents. According to Synergos, "35 percent of Pact's pilot cities had higher growth in primary school (EF I) than state and national growth averages, and 42.5 percent exceeded the target set for 2017. In the final years of Elementary School (EF II), 40 percent had growth equal to or higher than the national average, six of which grew more than double that average."³⁵

In its evaluation of the Pact, Synergos risks an explanation:

Results of elementary schooling seem to indicate that although there has been a decrease and/or reversal of the process of improvement of results, in the state of Pará between 2015 and 2017, in those municipalities where the principles of this initiative have been implemented more consistently results were much better. We can verify, however, that the final results were far from the 30 percent target of the IDEB increase at all levels until 2017. On the other hand, the results of the Pilot Municipalities seem to point to the possibility of approaching this goal, when the principles of Multi-sector Partnerships are implemented more effectively.

Politics and the Pact

2014 was a difficult year for the Pact. At the end of that year, there were elections for the government of the state of Pará. The campaign opposed political groups led by two local dynasties: one represented by the acting governor, Simão Jatene, the other by Helder Barbalho. The entire campaign was extremely polarized, with powerful competing communication groups supporting each side.

The Jatene campaign presented the Pact as the most important initiative of the government, with prime time television reserved for advertising pieces focused on it. And so the Pact entered the centrality of this polarization, as it was strongly associated with the acting governor.

At the end of the election process, Jatene was re-elected in the second round with a narrow victory (less than 4% difference), after almost drawing with Helder Barbalho in the first round.

Upon assuming his second term, and in order to live up to the political agreements that helped in his difficult re-election, the governor promoted a structural reorganization of government that affected the secretariats directly involved with the Pact, such as education. The change of leadership at the head of the secretariats, and also of intermediary bodies, led to a potential breakdown of pre-established schedules and routines.

The nongovernmental partners, who made up the State Pact Committee, drew the governor's attention to the risks of this breach of continuity. As a result, the partnership was realigned and renegotiated to ensure its continuity.

The Pact continued, but a conflicting relationship deepened between Synergos, as a backbone organization, and the new administration of the State Education Secretariat, which did not understand or accept Synergos performing that function. Governor Jatene intervened in the management of the conflict. His intervention resulted in the appointment of a new secretary of education, more in tune with the idea of partnership.

In 2015, the Pact had excellent results, as already mentioned. As soon as these results were announced, in August 2016, the government decided to assume the role of backbone organization, without having completed the process of transferring technology from multisectoral partnerships to the State Education Secretariat.

From then on, Synergos assumed a peripheral role, with a reduced power of action. The execution of the Pact, in the second half of 2016 and also in 2017, suffered serious setbacks due to the inexperience of the Education Secretariat as a backbone organization and the widespread idea that the Pact had an owner: Governor Simão Jatene.

These facts may explain the Pact's termination in 2018, when a change of administration took place with the victory of the opponent Helder Barbalho in that year's elections.



Former Pará state governor Simão Jatene

Figure 3: The 40 municipalities of the Pact for Education in Pará



What is the current situation?

There are multiple perceptions about the results of the Pact for Education in Pará. Much depends on the interlocutor. When looking at the process as a whole, it is clear that the first phase, from conceptualization and initial implementation (2012–2015), had a demonstrable impact in relation to the proposed goal and related indicators. Adherence to the Pact came from the novelty of the process, the willingness of key actors to get involved, and the leadership of Synergos as a backbone organization.

João Meirelles, executive director at Peabiru Institute, participated in the initial process of building Pact partnerships. He has a critical view of its results and of the degree to which the state education department was involved in and committed to the Pact:

First, I think the Pact needed more time to consolidate. There is no miracle, particularly in education. And then this business of approaching a whole state is also very difficult. Even more because in the structure of government we see that nothing has advanced. Pará's State Secretariat for Education would need to be transformed. I think the program failed to do what I call "social acupuncture." We did not really go into the government structure.³⁷

The problem identified by João Meirelles became more evident from 2016, when various private partners withdrew from the Pact and the state government was grappling with policy and management difficulties. That weakened the Pact's work towards cohesion and undermined its feasibility. Changes in political power also affected the Pact. As a result of the 2018 elections, which brought a change in the majority of the political party governing the state government of Pará, the Pact – in its original formulation – reached a definitive term.

State-level interviewees for this case study frequently expressed the view that, on the part of the government, there would have been an inability or lack of interest

in transforming the Pact into a state policy rather than a government program. As a result, the initiative was subject to political moods and instabilities.

Some municipal managers had expected that adherence to the Pact implied that they would receive financial resources from the IDB loan. This misperception may have contributed to further resistance.

Ida Pietricovsk Oliveira, a communication specialist with UNICEF in the Amazon region, shares her perception:

The Pact for Education in the speech was impressive, but the practice did not significantly alter the data that we have today on education in Pará. There was an expectation that the State Secretary of Education would be restructured, and this has not happened. Success stories, such as Ulianópolis, show the importance of the commitment of the administrator, the local manager. The people perceive that the results are significant where there is a real commitment of the government.³⁸

So, the question arises: What remained of learning and systemic change from the whole Pact for Education process?

Several interviewees for this case study indicated that despite all the difficulties encountered, the Pact had left a strong legacy of learning on how to work with multisectoral partnerships, as well as an understanding of the power of collaborative action in bringing about improvement in projects and attitudes.

Olenita Barreto, responsible for institutional relations in Brazil's North Region for the telecom company Vivo, was a key initial partner in the Pact. She elaborates:

The participation in the Pact, especially in its initial phase, helped me to strengthen my perception of my responsibility and of the company towards the local community, with the local school. Even if I didn't study there, if my children did not study there, but this school is here by my side. I have a responsibility as a citizen, as a company, to check if the school is in good condition, for example. After all, the school exists

thanks to my contributions with my taxes, right? It may not serve me directly, but at any moment I could be hiring a person who was a student at that school. And what is the education, the qualification that this person received from there? The school is the cradle of a person who will like to read, to be interested in many things, to grow. And everyone wins with this.³⁹

A key element that emerged from the interviews is that many actors involved in the Pact, including those who had been in the public sector for a long time, did not have the experience and knowledge to work in or develop multisectoral partnerships. Even among members of the private sector, this approach to collaborative work with the public sector was not obvious, since it was historically mediated by financial interest or immediate political gain.

Monica Eliana Ferreira, an education specialist at the Pará state Secretary of Education, highlighted the direct contribution of the Pact in improving the quality of evaluation:

The public policy has a purpose: to improve the quality of education, which has the direct impact of having children and young people better prepared for life. As a direct result of the Pact, today we have a Teacher Training Center that is very good. We implemented an evaluation system, the Sispae, which evaluates the performance of students from state and municipal public schools enrolled in the 4th and 8th degrees of elementary school and 1st, 2nd and 3rd years of secondary education in Portuguese and Mathematics. We evaluate the student and also identify the teacher of that student. That is, we have not only quantitative results but also qualitative, evaluating the quality of teaching. Today the Sispae is in the 144 municipalities of Pará, even in municipalities that did not adhere to the Pact.⁴⁰

The theme of Inner Work arises marginally in the interviews. However, it is present to the extent that there is an understanding of the need to change mindsets and to prepare to work collaboratively, which often implies a loss of individual power.

The teacher Cristian Lilian Vilhena, manager of educational resources at Ananindeua municipality, one of the pilot municipalities, comments on her own internal transformation:

For me, participating in the Pact was important, as a person and as a professional, for putting into practice my role in things that I did not know were inside me. The potential I think I have already. But I just identified it and recognized my identity as an articulator, as a strategist, after participating in the Pact.⁴¹

Ana Hage shares this perception of individual transformation, which ends up being reflected in other spheres of action:

Look, my main change, I think it's been to look at the collective all the time. Because by then I worked a lot on what was mine, in my world, in my objectives, right? Even when I was a principal at an elementary school, I only thought about it. So, I think the big change I brought from this experience with the Pact was that to pay attention to the collective, to appreciate the partnerships. To understand that in society we have people who can help us regardless of the financial issue. For instance, now my look at teacher training has one foot in the partnerships. In recognizing the importance of NGOs. Before, we looked as if they were a world apart, not as something together. The Pact brought this to me.⁴²

Jane Buecke, who was the head of a school located within Agropalma, one of the companies that partnered with the Pact, complements this vision:

It was an interesting experience for me, which opened up a vision I had not had before. In the specialization I did, I had classes on partnerships, but always on partnerships for money, expecting something in return. The Pact was very important to me, in that sense of seeing that you can think of actions that involve attitudes, common actions, and have a positive result.⁴³

Of the 40 cities that originally became pilot municipalities, Ulianópolis is an exemplary success story. In the next part, we will focus on this story to understand the reasons for success and the lessons to be learned from this case.

Pact for Education's learning points

The Synergos Institute conducted an evaluation of the Pact for Education. Several significant learning points emerged from this exercise.

The evaluation highlighted the importance of governments to prioritize multisectoral partnership processes, especially in the case of complex issues involving other social actors such as NGOs, the private sector, and universities. The key is to ensure that multisectoral partnerships become public policy, resulting in an integration of effort that goes beyond an allocation of financial resources.

Multisectoral partnerships respond to dynamic processes. Therefore, it is fundamental to build a common agenda, goals, and culture that serve as a consensual reference point among the various partners.

Finally, Synergos identified the strategic relevance of having a structuring organization to coordinate partnerships, mobilize participants, evaluate results, and manage communication.⁴⁴

A new frontier: The Ulianópolis case

The right to quality education is, I believe, the perfect way to bridge the gap between different cultures and to reconcile various civilizations. Without such a right, the values of freedom, justice, and equality will have no meaning. Ignorance is the greatest danger and threat to mankind.

Moza bint Nasser⁴⁵

Compared with traditional ways of traveling through the Amazon region, the trip to the city of Ulianópolis is reasonably easy. It is all made by road, which is in good condition and which connects Belém with Brasília, the capital of Brazil. In light traffic, the journey is a five hour-drive.

The view from both sides of the road surprises a person from outside the state of Pará. I was expecting the Amazon forest. The truth is quite different. For most of



Figure 4: The state of Pará and Ulianópolis

the trip, what I saw were large open areas dedicated to extensive agriculture or livestock raising. The green I saw was from plantations, not forests. And this is a significant element in understanding the dynamics of that part of Pará, known as the southeastern macro-region of the state. This region has been settled intensively, especially since the 1960s, following incentives from the military government that controlled the country at the time. The objective was to facilitate settlement in that region as part of economic development and national security policies.

Some of the slogans issued by the military governments of the time reinforce this idea: “Integrar para não entregar” (Integrate to avoid conceding) and “Uma terra sem homens para homens sem terra” (A land without men for landless men). The slogans sought to shape public opinion on the importance of the National Integration Plan. Created by the military government, the plan was based on the premise that the Amazon was a kind of “demographic void,” ready to be occupied and exploited to generate wealth for the country and, at the same time, diminish the risks to national security represented by foreign interests in the region’s riches.⁴⁶

Researcher Marise Rocha Morbach, from the University of the Amazon, offers her interpretation:

Concepts such as “demographic void” and “land without men” occupied the collective imaginary, establishing close relations between the goals of occupation expressed by the militaries and the desires of the rural population. Time would quickly unveil the real intentions of the occupation. They would distance themselves, diametrically, from the ideals of private land ownership, designed for rural workers, and would return to the historic policy of exclusion to which rural populations in Brazil are subject.⁴⁷

Obviously, the idea of occupying a “virgin and unexplored” region did not take account of the indigenous populations who had occupied the region for centuries and who were presented by the military government as living in “isolation.” Families who were engaged in subsistence agriculture and who had lived in the region for decades also did not count for large projects of occupation and exploitation.

It is not without reason, therefore, that high levels of violence permeate the recent government-driven settlement of the Amazon, especially in the south and southeast of Pará. To this we must add corruption, irregular land occupation, violence against indigenous communities and small farmers who were originally living there, persecution, and the murder of farmers and human rights activists.

The state’s indifference to solving this situation was noted in a report produced by the Human Rights and Minorities Commission of the Chamber of Deputies in 2001:

*There are multiple reports on the lack of police defense of the citizenship rights of rural workers, of omission in the face of gun-power and the formation of militias by large landowners, of omission in the face of notorious frauds in the titling of public lands by landowners, on the lack of judges and prosecutors and proper working conditions for these public agents, on alarming deficiencies in public services in general.*⁴⁸

Occupying the “void”

The pioneer groups that settled in the region where the city of Ulianópolis was established began to arrive in the 1960s. Attracted by access to land and the potential for forest exploitation, they came from regions more to the south of Brazil or from the neighboring state of Maranhão. The opening of the Belem–Brasília highway in the 1970s further facilitated access, increasing the pace of settlement and the region’s economic development.

This development followed a well-known pattern in the Amazon, which begins with clearing the forest to exploit the wood’s economic potential, moves on to using the open land for cattle raising activities, and culminates in the development of large agribusiness projects, usually for soybean planting and processing.

Researchers Mariana Soares Domingues and Célio Bermann explain the typical consequences of this process:

*In fact, the expansion of soybean production is causing serious deforestation through the dynamics of forest clearing, implantation of livestock and subsequent transformation of the area into mechanized agriculture. This process leads to the expansion of the agricultural frontier. With the increasing modernization of production, many workers are excluded from these processes. Therefore, they tend to move to marginal areas where they contribute to the opening of new mobile frontiers or expand the reach of existing ones.*⁴⁹

The arrival by car in Ulianópolis is marked precisely by this surrounding landscape, composed of large areas dedicated to agroindustry. The city itself has a population of around 58,000 people, with an average monthly income of around US\$453, but with 46% of the population living on less US\$153 per month.⁵⁰ It is, therefore, a poor city where the growth of mechanized agroindustry has changed the kinds of occupation available.

The industries and other actors that surround agroindustry require a more skilled worker, which imposes further pressure on the educational system. This factor, combined with the predominant types of occupation in the region, may help to explain why the city is so prepared to develop and implement a collaborative initiative such as the Pact for Education.

João Meirelles, director of the Institute Peabiru, calls attention to the particularity of the region where Ulianópolis is located: “This is a region of recent migration. It is not the classic Amazon.”⁵¹

Collaborative Education

In Ulianópolis, I counted on the invaluable support of Aurelino Gomes, the city’s secretary of education, to identify and interview key local actors, and to start to put together a more complete picture of how the Pact worked locally. As secretary of education, Aurelino was well placed to act as a bridging leader. He was able to perceive the Pact’s potential as a key element in a broader project to strengthen

education as a central element of municipal development. He knew how to move strategically, with the full support of the city mayor, herself a former secretary of education.

Aurelino was able to map and identify actors, both within and outside government, who would be key to building the partnerships needed to implement the Pact. He developed a plan with his team to support the Pact and bring in new partnerships. Above all, he brought together a vision of purpose that served as a constant stimulus to all the actors involved.

Aurelino believes that a key factor in the Pact's success in Ulianópolis is the continued willingness of municipal administrations to value education as a distinctive element of local development.



School Director Aldenice Alves Lopes shows the positive results of Alexandre Bergamin School in the IDEB.

It all starts with having a real public policy that gives special attention to education. If there is not this look, the thing does not happen, it does not sustain itself. This translates, for example, into a training plan for teachers, which makes a lot of difference. Another fundamental and obvious stimulus: pay salaries on time. The salaries here, unfortunately, are not high, because we have no resources, but we never delay payment. We do not have a strong economy and we rely heavily on federal transfers. We cannot offer a remunerative advantage to our employees, but we make wise and timely investments in order to have teachers stimulated and working in schools with a good structure.⁵²

The theme of school infrastructure drew my attention. I visited some schools in the city during class time and I could see that an investment had been made in offering students and teachers attractive and well-maintained facilities. I could not help contrasting what I saw in Ulianópolis with the terrible structure of the Fé em Deus School and reflecting on how this affects the educational process and its final results.

Opening the school door

The public education system in the city does not have multifunctional professional teams. For this reason, Aurelino explains, it was crucial to involve other areas of government in implementing the Pact in Ulianópolis.

I will not hide from you, but today in the municipal education network I do not have a psychologist, for example. I do not have a nurse, a social worker. I do not have a pediatrician for daycare. I have pedagogues, teachers. I cannot have more. So, what do we do? Look for partnerships. In the Secretaries of Health or Social Assistance, for instance.⁵³

Neuza Pinheiro, mayor of Ulianópolis, echoes this vision. She credits the success of the Pact in the city to the relationship of trust that has been built with the various social actors involved. Trust and confidence are sustained through the continuity of processes and transparency in how resources are used.

She says:

There is one very simple and obvious thing: we use the resources of education in education. If we receive resources to build or improve a school, they are used for that. We respect teachers, students, and parents. All this generates confidence and encourages adherence and participation in the Pact. When we talk to an entrepreneur, the old attitude with which they were accustomed was that they would have to give money. On the contrary, what we are looking for is a partnership, which goes beyond financial exchanges.⁵⁴

This opening of the municipal administration, especially the education department, to the process of building multisectoral partnerships, was directly responsible for the success of the Pact at the municipal level. The city is constantly used as a reference point and is invited to share its experience with other municipalities.

One of the first challenges, for Aurelino, was to open the minds of civil servants to the importance of opening the school to the community. Although this may seem obvious, common practice is to have the school as a separate element, somehow isolated from the surrounding community. School directors interviewed in Ulianópolis recall a time when their rooms were closed to interaction with parents and other members of the community.

As Aldenice Alves Lopes, the principal at the Alexandre Bergamin Municipal School, says:

In many schools, people, fathers and mothers, have a great deal of difficulty in talking to teachers, to the management. We changed that! My room, for example, is right at the entrance of the school and is always with the doors open. We are always willing to talk to the community. In this sense, the Pact was fundamental. This partnership must not be broken. Let more partners come to talk and work with us. Because we have obtained magnificent results. Within the school, we perceive this difference in our students' learning and in the motivation of the school staff. Not only with the teachers but also with the whole team.⁵⁵

That change had already been happening in Ulianópolis but the Pact for Education strengthened it. The participation of managers and teachers in the process of learning and the collaborative construction of the Pact was fundamental to concrete action for educational improvement in the city.

The Synergos team closely supported the staff of the Secretary of Education in Ulianópolis and assisted in building the first collaborative bridges with leaders from different areas, especially local businesspeople and religious leaders. The Pact's Municipal Committee played a crucial role in organizing collaborative work, establishing goals, and exploring possibilities for engagement.

Local respondents for this case study highlighted that the vision of collaboration, beyond the mere donation of money, is what had attracted them to the Pact. They realized that participation was taking place on a deeper basis, from a common understanding of the benefits of quality education for the whole municipality, including entrepreneurs who lacked skilled labor.

The existence of bridging leaders in the business field assisted in mobilizing entrepreneurs and businessmen to the Pact in Ulianópolis. One of those leaders, Marcos Zancaner (CEO of biofuel company Pagrisa), played a key role in attracting 32 other local entrepreneurs to support the Pact:⁵⁶

I thought the concept of the Pact was correct. Although I did not understand where the businessmen would enter into the education process, since the entrepreneur is more focused on producing than teaching, right? I even started to read and learn more about education, to learn how school management is assessed. At first, we found it a very great challenge, this interaction of private initiative with public initiative. There were doubts whether the speed of work would be compatible with what we were accustomed to. But soon we understood that there was a space for collaboration, to give students a vision of the future.⁵⁷

In all the interviews, there was a unanimous perception that participation in the Pact at the municipal level had a strong impact on personal visions about education and



A presenter from the Tocantis committee presents their strategy.

how each one could act proactively from their own capacities. Interviewees could perceive elements of internal transformation that even modified their ways of acting in their homes and work environments.

Lilia Aquino, one of the most active businesswomen in the Pact for Education in Ulianópolis, comments on how her participation changed her perception of public education:

It was really very good. We had the opportunity to get to know the reality of municipal education closely. We, as businesspeople, often end up putting children in private schools because we think they will be better off. But by participating in the Pact, we saw the reality of the community, where education is really good.⁵⁸

Rita Silva Viana teaches the fifth grade at Alexandre Bergamin School. She mentions an episode that corroborates this point:

Generally, those who have better financial conditions prefer to put their children in a private school, because they think it is better. So, some entrepreneurs had this prejudice with public education. As they got closer to us because of the Pact, they saw how we work, how we care about education, about the development of the students. They started to get very engaged. For you to have a notion, here in the municipality there is a private school that serves children studying from the first to the fifth grade. Formerly it worked in two shifts of classes, but today it works only one shift because part of the parents decided to enroll their children in the public schools. Here at our school, we have cases such as this, of parents who took their children from the private school, even being a good school, to enroll with us. They saw what our work is like. This is for us very positive, of course; it's a signal of great relevance.⁵⁹

The participation of religious leaders, especially from the Catholic Church, which still has a strong presence in the region, was also a unifying element in the engagement of parents and students, and other members of civil society, in the Pact. Father João Ribeiro, parish priest of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, participated in the local Pact Committee and built bridges to include leaders of other religious denominations.

I felt encouraged to engage in the Pact because the Catholic Church has always been a pioneer in education. So, the Church cannot lose its origin, evading its responsibility. We are always open to education. The important thing is to do a differentiated education, with community involvement giving their contributions. The community manifests itself, does not it? Whether it be a businessman, a Catholic Christian or from another denominations, a member of the community, all working in partnerships. Showing that it is very important for the community to interact with education.⁶⁰

Table 1: IDEB – Elementary Public Schools

5th Grade			
	2013	2015	2017
Brazil	4.9	5.3	5.5
Pará	4.0	3.8	4.3
Ulianópolis	5.5	5.9	6.0

9th Grade			
	2013	2015	2017
Brazil	4.0	4.2	4.4
Pará	3.4	3.6	3.6
Ulianópolis	4.2	4.6	4.8

The results of the Pact for Education in Ulianópolis soon became felt. In 2013, 2015, and 2017, the municipal’s IDEB rating was the highest among the 144 cities in the state of Pará. It even surpassed both the state and the national indexes, as shown in the table below:

The success of the Pact in Ulianópolis made the city a reference point, getting the attention of other municipalities with similar challenges. Aurelino Gomes comments on one of these visits:

In January of this year [2019], we received a mayor from the city of Quatipuru, who came with a delegation to understand how we worked on the theme of education in Ulianópolis. They spent the day with us to know how we work here. I spoke to the mayor on the Pact for Education, that to succeed you need to involve the various actors of the community. He said: “Guy, I liked this idea a lot and I’m going to take it to Quatipuru.”⁶¹

With the change in the governing party of Pará, following the 2018 elections, the Pact for Education was paralyzed once and for all. But Ulianópolis decided to continue. A call went out for all actors who had previously participated to redesign and launch a new version.

In April 2019, the new version of the Pact was launched in Ulianópolis. Now it is called the Entrepreneurial Educator Project. According to Aurelino Gomes, the objective remains to encourage community participation to improve education:

We have brought the various areas of municipal public management and representatives of society to this new moment. Ulianópolis was the only municipality in Pará to reach the goals of the Pact for Education that was extinguished this year. And we will ensure that this work continues, with the support of municipal management and the active participation of the community. Why entrepreneurial educator? Because we believe that education must give the elements to people to move forward, to have a meaningful life, and to return to society the investment they received.⁶²

Therefore, although Ulianópolis does not have a big river as do other regions of Pará State, it decided to jump into the water and to embanzeirar the waves produced by the possibility of a high-quality, transformational education system.

How a bridging leader makes a difference

An essential element for the success of collaborative processes is the existence of bridging leaders. The Synergos Institute conceptualizes bridging leaders as people who are able to “create the conditions necessary for establishing bridges of trust, respect, and solidarity between the different partners of the same group and between different groups of partners, especially surpassing the so-called ‘social frontiers.’”

In the case of Ulianópolis, the municipal secretary of education, Aurelino Gomes, has the essential characteristics for exercising the Bridging Leadership that enabled the successful implementation of the Pact for Education in the city.

Aurelino’s family originates from the state of Minas Gerais, in the southeast region of Brazil. When he was still a child, they moved to the state of Maranhão, in northeast Brazil. They had been small farmers and were attracted to the “new frontier” that opened with easy access to land in Pará. They ended up settling in Ulianópolis, at the time a newly created city.

Aurelino never had a specific vocation in the area of education. He entered this field by pure chance: “To be honest, I got a job at the secretary of education and started to fall in love with the subject. I decided that if that was it, then I had to learn everything I could about it.” From there, he graduated in pedagogy and did postgraduate studies in education.

He has always been moved by the idea that education cannot be solved solely within the school walls and that any solution should involve other actors: “For me, it is clear that this view is true. When I started working in this area many years ago, the situation of education was very bad in Ulianópolis. The proof that I made the right decision is to see how much we have improved over those years.”

His vision is in line with the principles that guided the Pact for Education, which eventually made him a natural bridging leader at the local level. Aurelino acknowledges his leadership role in this process.

He gives his view of the characteristics that enabled him to act as a bridging leader:

First, you need to be open and willing to listen to the various parts without trying to impose your vision. Each one has their expectations, their anguish, their ability to participate and we must respect these individualities, but at the same time we must stimulate active participation. It is also critical to be transparent, to be honest about the capacity to accomplish the goals, and the resources that exist. Finally, it is essential to create a climate of trust, which is strengthened when people see that the promises are fulfilled, that the results and contributions are recognized.

Aurelino believes in the efficiency and effectiveness of collaborative work to solve the challenge of providing a quality education that helps children and young people overcome the limits imposed by life. According to him, it is this certainty that moves the municipal administration of Ulianópolis to carry forward the principles of the Pact, even if it no longer exists at the state level.

We can’t go back. We must move forward to deliver quality and transformative education. The decision I made years ago to devote myself to education changed my life as a person and a professional. And I’m glad to know that I can give my little help to others to follow in this direction, each with their possibilities and talents.

Conclusion

*Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.*⁶³

Kofi Annan

If education is the way to help people to embaizerar, to overcome some of the limits life imposes, it is undeniable that there are also limits that any system of education must overcome if education itself is to exercise this noble function.

The creation of the Pact for Education in Pará was precisely an attempt to overcome those limits, through a new logic based on collaborative partnerships involving various sectors of government and society.

The results obtained by the Pact indicate that there is still a long way to go in realizing the dream that was the basis of its creation. Still, interviews and testimonials for this case study show that a seed was planted.

Several interviewees acknowledged that they have come to understand the logic of collaboration in a deeper way, which influences how they act in those places where the Pact for Education has flourished. This suggests that this type of approach, of multisectoral partnerships, is effective not only to improve external processes but also to foster internal changes in the participants.

As Synergos noted in a guide on multisectoral partnerships:

*Multi-sector partnerships are done not only with good intentions, nor with simple agreement to work together. Their success depends fundamentally on how they are designed, the implementation process, the existence of bridge leaders, types of governance and the ability of the organizers to facilitate the creation of trust links between partners.*⁶⁴

I recall a conversation I had with Adriana Gomes Rosa, education specialist at the Secretary of Education of the State of Pará. Adriana coordinated, within the



Synergos photo

Secretariat, the technical office that started to manage the Pact directly from 2016. She spoke of her personal and professional learning through the Pact:

*It was a very rewarding experience; this relationship with society, with the private world, with people. It was a very good learning relationship. You realize that integration between the government and the different aspects of society behind a single goal is extremely beneficial. And there were concrete gains. Of the 40 pilot municipalities, 38 had an increase in the IDEB. So we are happy to be able to quantify the number of people affected by the Pact, not only in the municipal and state management levels but also straight in the schools. In short, the Pact has generated and has left seeds in people, in design, in ways of dealing with partnerships and with society. I will certainly carry on that learning in my personal and professional life.*⁶⁵



Renato Guimaraes photo

Students from Dr. Wilson Zancaner School

This learning was also very clear to me. When I began the journey of writing this case study, I decided that in addition to reading the materials already produced on the Pact for Education, it would be essential to talk to the people who were making it happen in various levels. From those direct and frank conversations, I understood in more depth the challenges that professionals face in order to provide quality education. And, by doing that, to give the tools for children and young people to be better prepared to face the many challenges they will encounter in their lives.

The combination of collaborative partnerships involving different sectors of government and society, bridge leadership, and Inner Work seems to be a factor of success of the Pact for Education in the municipalities that have found ways to deploy it. Ulianópolis is a tangible example of the power of this combination.

But even in the context where the Pact did not stand up, especially at the state level, it still planted seeds. Of course, the challenge is to make them flourish and grow, albeit with other names or structures.

Moacir Gadotti, a professor at the University of São Paulo and president of the Deliberative Council of the Institute Paulo Freire, captures the essence of this challenge:

Paulo Freire maintained that history is the “time of possibility”, of “collective possibility”. That means it’s up to each of us, but it’s up to all of us, too. In this struggle, there is an individual dimension (how can I, in my personal and professional trajectory, be in a permanent search for “being more”?) and a collective dimension (what are the spaces to fight for quality education and for the appreciation of the educator?). Paulo Freire also affirmed that “he was not hopeful by stubbornness, but by historical and existential imperative.”⁶⁶

Each of us, as individuals, members, and leaders of organizations, are faced with the historical and existential imperative of collaborating to build an education that will lead people to overcome their limits, to dive and surpass the waves of the river of life.

My Learning Journey: A personal reflection

In October 2018, Wanda Engel Aduan, then the executive director of the Synergos Institute in Brazil, invited me to write this case study. I had worked with Wanda many years before, early in my professional career, in an NGO she had co-founded in Rio de Janeiro. This organization worked in partnership with Synergos and developed projects in the field of education.

Now, many years later, I would have the opportunity to return to work with Synergos on the subject of education, which I deeply value.

I believe it is not possible to create healthy societies without the existence of an education system that allows people to fully exercise their citizenship and to have access to knowledge, practical skills, and relationship networks that enable them to be better leaders and to fulfill their dreams, advance their lives, and contribute to society.

I was particularly happy to work on this study because I had heard of the Pact for Education in Pará through the voice of Wanda, who had spoken about it to me with great passion in previous conversations. Her enthusiasm was justified. Through her leadership in conceptualizing and implementing the Pact for Education in Pará, she realized a vision that she had been building, throughout her academic and professional career, on the crucial role that multi-sectoral partnerships can play in improving education.

I remember her talking about the great challenge of building a partnership involving various sectors of government and society. She believed that there was no better way to solve the complex problems of public education than implementing a strategic approach that involved all those sectors.

Now, I had the opportunity to make my small contribution so that the learning that emerged from the Pact for Education initiative is better known.

To face the challenge of writing this case study, I sought as much information as possible about the Pact. The Synergos Institute had already carried out a process of

evaluation and understanding of the results of the initiative. It had also produced a more analytical and practical document, a guide on collaborative strategies for complex social problems.

In addition to accessing other documents, videos, and lectures on the Pact and on education in general, I traveled to Pará to talk to people, and know firsthand what they thought about the initiative.

Therefore, the second part of my preparation was a field visit, which lasted for about 12 days. I did my best to talk to as many key people involved in the project as possible, both in Belém, the Pará State capital, and in Ulianópolis, one of the cities that has become a reference point in the Pact.

In all, I conducted 35 interviews with key stakeholders in government, civil society, business, and multilateral organizations.

In addition to consulting the material produced by Synergos and face-to-face interviews, I sought other documents and literature to help me gain a broader understanding of Pará's social-political-economic context and on the theme of education.

All of this contributed to a case study that portrays some prominent features of the Pact for Education in Pará. The portrayal tries not only to register the process itself but also to throw light on what it means to bring together – and make operational – the building-blocks of collaborative partnerships.

Every learning process is a two-way journey. In writing this document, I learned a lot and feel that I grew as a person and a professional. I am more convinced than ever about the fundamental importance of education to transform people's lives and about my individual responsibility in helping this process to move forward.

Renato Guimaraes



PACTO: GARANTIR A LETRAMENTO ATÉ OS 8 ANOS

QUALIDADE DA EDUCAÇÃO PARA FAZEMOS PAZ

Annex: Interviewees

In order to collect first-hand information and insights to enrich this case study, I talked to and interviewed 35 people. The conversations had different levels of depth and were aimed at capturing and understanding not only the respondents' points of view on the Pact, but also how they understood the process of internal transformation (Inner Work) resulting from participation in the initiative, as well as the respective personal and professional impact.

Not all the interviews were captured in the form of quotes included in the final text, but all insights that emerged from them were extremely useful in providing a broader view for the case study.

The following is the list of respondents (in alphabetical order):

- Adriana Gomes Rosa, Education Specialist, State Secretary of Education, Belém, Pará
- Adriano Castro Rodrigues, Pedagogical Coordinator, Dr. Wilson Zancaner City Public School, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Ana Claudia Hage, Former State Secretary of Education, Belém, Pará
- Angelo Piccoli Lambert Damas, Education Officer, Unicef, Belém, Pará
- Aldenice Alves Lopes, Principal, Alexandre Bergamin Public Municipal School, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Aurelino Gomes, City Secretary of Education, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Cristian Lilian Vilhena, Manager, Educational Resources, City Secretary of Education, Ananindeua, Pará
- Daniel Domagala, Director, Partnership Services & Bridging Leadership Programs, The Synergos Institute, Sao Paulo
- Father João Ribeiro, Parish Priest, Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Francisca Carvalho da Silva, Principal, Dr. Wilson Zancaner City Public School, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Heider Carvalho, City Counciller, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Ida Pietricovsk Oliveira, Communication Specialist at Unicef for the Amazon Region, Belém, Pará
- Igor Gatti, Businessman, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Jane Buecke, Former School Principal at Agropalma (Private company)
- João Meirelles, Executive Director at the Peabiru Institute, Belém, Pará
- Katia Freitas, Principal, Marisanta Passarinho City Public School, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Leonardo Gomes, Church Secretary, Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Levi Silva, Principal, Celestino Facco City Public School, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Lília Aquino, Businesswoman, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Maisson Arruda de Oliveira, Businessman, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Marcos Zancaner, CEO at biofuel company Pagrisa, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Marly Silva, Pedagogical Coordinator, Marisanta Passarinho City Public School, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Monica Eliana Ferreira, Education Specialist at the State Secretary of Education, Belém, Pará
- Nazareno Lobato, Grandfather of two children who study at State Public School Fé em Deus, Belém, Pará

- Neto Pereira, Businessman, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Neuza Pinheiro, Mayor, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Olenita Barreto, Institutional Relations for Brazilian Northern Region at Telefonica-Vivo, Belém, Pará
- Rafael Brito, Businessman, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Renato Uliana, Businessman, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Rita Silva Viana, Teacher at 5th Grade, Alexandre Bergamin Public School, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Rubens de Aquino Oliveira, teacher of science and biology, State Public School Fé em Deus, BÉlem, Pará
- Socorro Santos, Teacher 5th Grade and Adult Literacy, Marisanta Passarinho City Public School, Ulianópolis, Pará
- Walter Bernardo Cardoso da Cruz, Manager at State Secretary of Education (USE10), Belém, Pará
- Wanda Engel Aduan - Former Executive Director at The Synergos Institute in Brazil, Rio de Janeiro
- Wania Claudia de Souza Cantañede, Principal at State Public School Fé em Deus, BÉlem, Pará

Notes

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⁷ About 23% of the Brazilian population.

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Synergos is a global organization helping solve complex issues around the world by advancing bridging leadership, which builds trust and collective action.

The Inner Work for Social Change project aims to shed light on the power of personal transformation in social impact.

To learn more, visit innerworkforsocialchange.org.

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INNER WORK for SOCIAL CHANGE

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Synergos is a global organization helping solve complex issues around the world by advancing bridging leadership, which builds trust and collective action.

We believe in the power of building trust. It's how we create regenerative solutions around the world.

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