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Public Reform and Private Expansion

The Development of Higher Education in Brazil

This paper is based on a presentation by Professor Claudio de Moura Castro on Brazilian higher education at a CDE Roundtable: 'Reflecting on Brazil's Success'. Professor de Moura Castro was part of a Brazilian delegation of experts brought to CDE for a series of workshops. (See CDE, Reflecting on Brazil's Success: How Durable? What Lessons for South Africa? CDE Roundtable, No. 20, September, 2012)

South Africa urgently needs to expand and improve its higher education sector. The country needs to significantly enlarge our skills base, give young people a better chance of finding employment, and produce a larger supply of better-trained teachers and tertiary educators. All of these goals can be addressed by expanding access to and improving the quality of higher education institutions. This will not be easy.

While we should be careful about importing Brazilian policies without adapting them to our context, Professor de Moura Castro's description of the Brazilian experience provides some interesting lessons for South Africa. Faced with rapidly expanding demand for tertiary education and limited public supply, Brazilian authorities opened up the system. Private institutions have been instrumental in the rapid expansion of the higher education sector in Brazil without undermining the quality of provision. In addition private profit making companies made a large contribution to vocational training, developed more effective teaching materials, used television programmes to enhance skills development, and set-up large education chains to exploit economies of scale.

Background

South African Education Challenges

Education challenges in South Africa have many facets. CDE's research in the past has focused primarily on reform with respect to mathematics and science education at the secondary schooling level. However, as new research comes in, it becomes clearer that there are both upstream and



downstream challenges at the tertiary level which are just as, if not more, trenchant. If foundational level achievements are amongst the worst in the world (as the national assessments demonstrate) how can secondary school teachers achieve much off such a base? And, if one of the reasons for poor performance is the low quality of teacher training in many institutions, what does this say about our universities, who have been training the teachers?

There are many indications that South Africa's universities are nowhere near the level they should be for a country of this level of development. The National Development Plan amongst others identifies the massive shortages of PhDs, to choose but one indicator. At the same time lecturers are often burdened with the demands of educating under-prepared undergraduates.

Nevertheless, a first degree remains the prized possession of many students and their families. Indeed, there are strong indications that demand for higher education is outstripping supply. For example, in January 2012, Gloria Sekwena died and at least 20 other people were seriously injured after about 5 000 people stampeded in a desperate attempt to register at the last minute with the University of Johannesburg. The university received more than 85 000 applications for fewer than 12 000 places in 2011. The complex reasons for this event have not yet been fully established, and it is to be hoped that such a tragedy never happens again. However, we need to recognise that young people's determination to get into tertiary institutions is well founded. For those who pass matric, obtaining some form of tertiary education subsequently increases their likelihood of finding a job by 100 per cent.¹



There are strong indications that demand for higher education is outstripping supply

The Way Forward

Expanding the size, quality and diversity of post-school education in South Africa is vitally important. Without this, it is hard to see how we can meet critical national goals. Growing the economy, developing a highly trained civil service, encouraging business expansion, reducing unemployment, and strengthening the home-grown supply of well-trained educators all depend on access to tertiary education and its quality. How we achieve this requires investigation and debate, a process the government is currently leading.

The Green Paper on Post-School Education and Training, released in February 2012, sets out government's intention to expand and improve the tertiary education sector. The aim is to raise enrolments from the current 900 000 to 1,5 million by 2030. This will lead to an increase in the higher education participation rate of 18 to 24 year olds from 16 to 23 per cent.² It could very well be beyond the capacity of the public sector to meet the rapidly expanding demand for higher education on its own. Despite government spending R1.5 billion on upgrading FET colleges between 2006 and 2008, the college sector continues to languish – poor pass rates, poor planning, financial mismanagement. According to the Green Paper 'the biggest problem facing the post-school system as a whole is the weakness and small size of the college sector.'

The Green Paper recognises that the private sector has a role to play in tertiary sector expansion. Government intends to get a better understanding of the number and quality of existing private



providers by improving 'data collection', and will then develop a 'nuanced strategy' to work with private providers to strengthen and expand provision.

What can we learn from Brazil?

Against this background, international experience becomes relevant, especially when it concerns countries of a similar level of development to South Africa.

In March 2012 the Centre for Development and Enterprise invited a panel of Brazilian experts to explore whether South Africa is learning the right lessons from Brazil. One of the four experts was Professor Claudio de Moura Castro who provided informative insights into the expansion and reform of the Brazilian higher education sector. Other Brazilian experts included Professor Armando Castelar Pinheiro, who outlined Brazil's economic performance. He assessed the factors behind this performance and analysed the sustainability of recent achievements. The late Professor Amaury de Souza described the large increase in the Brazilian middle class in the past ten years. He showed how the middle class is defined in Brazil, provided the reasons for middle class growth and assessed the sustainability of these trends. Dr. Andre Portela De Souza focused on the successful reduction of the Brazilian poverty rate, from nearly 23 per cent in 1993 to 8,4 per cent in 2009. (*See Reflecting on Brazil's Success: How Durable? What Lessons for South Africa? CDE Roundtable, No. 20, September, 2012*)

Professor Claudio de Moura Castro, the previous director of the Brazilian government's Agency for Post-Graduate Education (CAPES), outlined the growing role of the private sector in the expansion of Brazilian higher education and assessed the impact of these changes on the quality of education. He also discussed the role of business in providing post-school training and outlined an innovative way in which Brazilians accessed the education provided by top international universities.

Professor Castro is the Senior Advisor to the President, Grupo Positivo, an educational outreach organisation based in Curitiba, Brazil. He holds a Master's degree from Yale University and a PhD in Economics from Vanderbilt University. He has also served as the Chief Educational Advisor at the Inter-American Development Bank.

In this paper we provide a summary of Professor de Moura's Castro's presentation and the conclusions he reached. We include a selection of responses to the presentation made by South African experts at the workshop. Finally, we put forward CDE's reflections on the implications for improving the access and quality of higher education in South Africa.

The insights arising from the Brazilian higher education experience provide a sharp reminder of the long road that South Africa has to walk to achieve competitiveness with other developing countries. These learnings complement those made on Brazilian primary and secondary education in a previous CDE publication (*See Schooling Reform is Possible: Lessons for South Africa from International Experience, CDE Roundtable, No. 18, September 2011*).

Brazil is ranked
13th in the
world in terms
of international
publications



The Development of Brazilian Higher Education

Professor Claudio de Moura Castro, Senior Advisor to the President, Grupo Positivo

In the 1950s virtually no Brazilian research papers were published in accredited international scholarly journals. Today, Brazil accounts for almost 3 per cent of these publications. Brazil currently has the highest growth rate in the production of science and is ranked 13th in the world in terms of international publications.

This notable achievement came from a slow start and a low base, which derived from the legacy of Portuguese colonialism. An indication of this legacy is the fact that the illiteracy rate in metropolitan Portugal in the early 20th century was 80 per cent - and even higher in Brazil. Prior to 1945 the only higher education initiative of note was in the booming state of São Paulo, where the University of São Paulo was created in the early 1930s. It attracted European scholars of high standing and remains the premier Brazilian institution today. After 1945, massive investment in higher education established universities in all of Brazil's 26 states, and large-scale recruitment of Brazil's best students for post-graduate study overseas provided the personnel to staff them³.

Brazil's public universities have therefore delivered positive results. At the same time, there are problems with the rules that govern all federal universities and, as a whole, these institutions are very expensive. Average cost per student is at the level of OECD institutions. This is acceptable for the best ten per cent of universities, which generate high levels of research. But the rest generate almost no research and cost far too much for what they produce.



Expansion of private higher education has been rapid and far-reaching

Higher Education Reform and the Emergence of Private Providers

In the 1990s enrolment in secondary education trebled. When these students graduated the majority expected to find places for further study at tertiary institutions. At these inflated cost levels the Ministry of Education would probably have to double or triple its budget to meet current demand through additional public universities. This has forced a generally reluctant ministry to ease restrictions on the private sector which in the past had effectively prevented private colleges from opening.

Relaxation of some of the strict bureaucratic controls over tertiary education has led critics to claim there has been a drop in the general quality of higher education in Brazil. However, this does not appear to be the case. Figures show that students from new private institutions generally perform well in the national exams.

What is clear is that expansion of private higher education has been rapid and far-reaching. In the past 15 years, approximately 2 500 private higher education institutions have been created to the point where the previous domination of public institutions has been reversed. In 1995 private higher education institutions constituted one-quarter of the total and now they make up three-quarters. This expansion has been self-generating; private institutions are entirely funded by paying students and there are no significant government subsidies for private institutions in Brazil.



The expansion of the private higher education sector has been facilitated by an enormous pool of people with PhDs and master's degrees. The country produces almost 12 000 doctoral degrees and around 40 000 master's degrees every year. By international standards, their quality is respectable, although it varies depending on which institution conferred the degree.

These numbers are more than enough to supply the need for higher education teachers, even under the most optimistic growth rate. At this point only half of those who obtained a master's degree have become higher education teachers, leaving a reserve supply for future growth, in addition to the 40 000 new graduates produced each year. Around 85 per cent of PhDs are in teaching institutions, even though the average college prefers to hire people with master's degrees rather than PhDs. Scarcity of teachers is therefore not a constraint to higher education growth in Brazil.

Expanding Access to Higher Education

In contrast to countries where students are reluctant to move into higher education, Brazilians are eager to climb the education ladder. Surveys indicate that the overwhelming majority of students want to attend higher education.

As a result, the public universities, which still offer the best faculty and excellent facilities, always face demand levels that outstrip existing vacancies. In Medicine and Law, the best public universities will have 20 or 30 candidates for each vacancy. In less desirable areas like Education, ratios approach 1:1.

Free places in high status courses in the best public universities tend to go to students from high socio-economic status backgrounds. Their advantages include the social and intellectual capital of their families and high-quality education at private schools.

As a result less wealthy students usually have to enrol in private colleges, where they pay for the full cost of the education offered. The private colleges have, in other words, ensured that all those who can afford it will find a suitable place in higher education. However one of the major obstacles to expansion at present is financial as growing numbers of potential students cannot afford the tuition charged by colleges.

Under these circumstances a decisive element in the continued growth of Brazilian higher education will be the expansion of student loans and fellowships. In the 1970s, a student loan programme was created (FIES). However, it was too small to make a dent in the problem and limped along, burdened with unpaid debts. In recent years it has been overhauled, interest rates reduced, and the funding vastly expanded. It can now be considered a successful programme and it is expected to grow in the immediate future.

During the tenure of President Lula, the Minister of Education created a programme to swap taxes paid by private colleges for free tuition for the corresponding number of students (PROUNI). The programme imposes a ceiling on students' family income and then selects the academically stronger candidates. The programme was never well accepted by the left but, overall, it was an instant success.

The private colleges have ensured that all those who can afford it will find a suitable place in higher education



Enrolment in it grew fast and the quality of the PROUNI students tends to be slightly higher than that of the paying students.

The number of students receiving PROUNI or FIES remains modest; less than 20 per cent of students are supported by either of these programmes. However, private banks and other financial institutions are beginning to offer their own versions of student loans. The numbers show promise but are also still quite modest.

An on-going challenge for Brazilian higher education is that a vast proportion of students enter it with sorely inadequate academic preparation. To some extent, there is segmentation: better students are admitted to more demanding institutions – or courses of study – and the others to easier ones. This reduces the problem, but not enough. The monolithic legal and academic framework of higher education makes it difficult to tailor the structure and the ambition of the courses to the profile of the clientele.

Comparing Private and Public Higher Education

In Brazil all graduating students from tertiary institutions have to pass a standard examination in their fourth year. The Ministry of Education posts the average mark achieved by each course of study in this exam on the internet. Open access to the marks allows students, employers and others to 'grade' the institution.⁴

This exam allows one to draw meaningful comparisons between the institutions that the students attend. The numbers have to be evaluated carefully, however. When the data is released by the Ministry of Education, the private sector is considerably behind the public. However, the Ministry uses its own compound index. It takes the results of the tests applied to graduating students and adds to them several process variables, such as the qualifications of teachers, the proportion of full time staff, and opinions expressed by students. This is equivalent to the Michelin guide assessing the food of a restaurant by the types of ovens that were used to produce the food. If one looks at the data in a different way – by eliminating the manipulation carried out by the Ministry – the results look very different. If one simply compares what the graduates learned in the different institutions then the difference between the private and public sector practically disappears.⁵

Of the best 100 institutions, 64 are private. Many of these top performers are relatively unknown to the Brazilian public, and are often tucked away in smaller localities. Further, considering the worst 100 institutions, the proportion of public universities is equivalent to their share in the total distribution, i.e. they do not fare better than private colleges.

The cleaned-up analysis of the standard test results also reveals that the idea that not-for-profit institutions are better than for-profit institutions is simply wrong. Within the latter category some institutions have made their equity available, and sold it on the stock market. There is no evidence that these organisations are worse than any others. Curiously, institutions which have equity on the stock market are all relatively homogeneous, none are excellent, but none are very bad either. In theory, the Ministry of Education should probably spend less time and expense on concerning itself with the

Of the best 100 institutions, 64 are private



quality of private institutions. Meanwhile there are some poorly-functioning public universities that are neither under pressure to change, nor accountable to their non-fee paying students.

It may in fact be the case that bureaucratic over-regulation is undermining the quality of education. Colleges that focus on undergraduate programmes are, by all accounts, hampered by the restrictive education bureaucracy, which affects their ability to innovate and improve. By contrast, graduate schools have greater freedom, despite being headed by the same bureaucracy. The main reason is that graduate schools receive competitive funding from independent public agencies. In order to secure this funding they are under direct pressure to produce high-quality graduates and research. Graduate schools therefore tend to be higher-quality institutions than undergraduate universities.

Recent Developments in Brazilian Education

An interesting development in recent years has been the growth in educational institutions with more than 100 000 students. Many large institutions have bought out smaller, struggling institutions. These take-overs have also been encouraged because, in terms of the bureaucratic rules, the purchasing of another institution is easier than trying to establish a new institution. However, despite this trend towards concentration, the majority of educational institutions are still fairly small. There are currently only between 10 and 15 institutions with more than 100 000 students.

Multinational corporations have also entered the Brazilian higher education sector. The numbers remain small, but these corporations have been good at identifying gaps in the market. These companies, with access to finance and organisational and managerial expertise and experience, have been quite successful in the sector. Overall, much of the private sector activity in Brazilian education has not been the result of any deliberate government programme. Instead this activity has to be understood as spontaneous market development.

Multinational corporations have been good at identifying gaps in the market

Vocational Education and Private Provision

There is a shortage of vocational and technical training in Brazil, which is needed especially to accommodate the high drop-out rates from secondary schools. For primary schools there is near-universal enrolment, but in secondary schools only between 30 and 35 per cent of the appropriately-aged population are graduating. Much of the gap in technical and vocational training is once again being addressed by the private sector. Attendance at polytechnics and two-year diploma colleges had seen recent double-digit growth, but supply has not yet caught up with demand.

Private Business Initiatives

Businesses, as well as non-governmental organisations and non-educational branches of government, are providing significant amounts of workplace training. Taking into account all educational programmes provided or paid for by firms – ranging from English language and computer skills to advanced university degrees – the number of students benefitting is about 40 million.



An interesting example of business involvement in the provision of training and education was the co-operation between the Federation of Industry of the state of São Paulo and Globo, a large Brazilian media conglomerate. In 1995 the business association gave Globo's television subsidiary US\$30 million to produce a programme for workers who had not completed their schooling. This would be broadcast at 06h00 every morning. People would either tape the programme or watch it together in classrooms. The programme was so successful it was expanded to schools. Thus far, about seven million Brazilians have graduated from elementary or high school because of this initiative, which was initiated and implemented completely by the private sector.

The private sector is expanding its initiatives in other areas. A number of private schools have begun to produce their own textbooks and training materials, as well as training teachers. The publications produced also included support materials for teachers and principals. Towards the end of the 20th century these schools began to sell their services and products to other schools. There are currently at least ten of these types of service providers. Their market was initially restricted to the private sector but in the last five years there have been an increasing number of public municipalities that have begun to buy the products and services provided by these private education service providers. Half of the municipalities in São Paulo state are currently served by these private providers. Initial research shows that students from municipalities that utilised this system tended to perform better than those from municipalities which were not using it.

Sending Young People Abroad to Study

For 60 years Brazil has been sending students abroad to obtain Master's and PhD qualifications. The programme has never been interrupted nor suffered any major crises. The vast majority of those sent abroad, returned to Brazil. The proportion of those returning to Brazil after completing their studies was close to 100 per cent. In addition, the programme is meritocratic, has very few inefficiencies and is not corrupt.

President Dilma Rousseff has expanded this initiative and declared that 100 000 students will be sent abroad over the next five years. In the past the programme was wholly state-funded, but, due to a recent policy change, 25 per cent of those sent abroad will now be funded by the private sector. In addition, there will be a greater emphasis on science-based disciplines. There will now be fewer students doing PhDs in France on Brazilian literature.

The policy of sending people abroad to study has resulted in Brazil securing a competitive advantage in fields such as the production of ethanol. It is difficult to imagine that EMBRAPA, a Brazilian state-owned agricultural company that employs about 6 000 people with PhDs, could have been so successful in contributing to the stellar performance in agricultural production and exports, without the policy of sending Brazilians abroad.

Once government improved the regulatory environment the private sector expanded rapidly



Conclusions

Brazilian higher education, while starting from a very low base, has produced numerous successes. Initially, the government sector expanded rapidly, and generally delivered quality university education, although, as is the case in many countries, there is variability in terms of the quality of different institutions. Once government improved the regulatory environment – from impossibly restrictive to tolerable – the private sector expanded rapidly, and has made a major contribution to expanding post-schooling access in Brazil. Contrary to the fears of many Brazilian officials and experts, private providers have not lowered the standard of education. While there is also variability across private institutions, private students fared as well as public students in assessments, and the majority of the best 100 institutions are now private.

The private sector has been innovative in developing new educational products and institutional forms. Companies have seen business opportunities and, as a result, have developed more effective teaching materials, used television programmes to enhance skills development and set-up large education chains that exploit economies of scale.

Selected South African Responses

Professor Peliwe Lolwana, Director, Wits Education Policy Unit

South Africa's biggest challenge regarding post-school education is in the non-university sector. It is at this vocational level where South Africa has its biggest skills shortages, and where there is a great demand for education. The secondary schooling system has expanded but institutions that could accommodate the growing number of school leavers have not emerged.

There have been calls for the expansion of the university system in South Africa to accommodate the increased demand, but this is a misunderstanding of the problem. In Brazil, and also in South Korea, the problem was solved to a degree by the expansion of the non-university, post-schooling system. These countries initially concentrated on increasing quantity, rather than quality. In South Africa, there seems to be an obsession with high-end notions of 'quality', with the result that many people cannot be accommodated by the current education system.

Another problem in South Africa is that the concept of multi-purpose college institutions has never been applied. In the past there were teaching, nursing, or police colleges, but middle-level, post-school institutions – which are not universities – have never been developed extensively in this country.

South Africa suffers from having a large number of very weak and fragile public post-school institutions. The question arises whether the government should look to the private sector to strengthen these institutions. In my opinion an exclusive focus on private providers is not a good idea. Public institutions need to be built up and strengthened. In addition, the private

The private sector has been innovative in developing new educational products and institutional forms



provision of post-school, non-university education is unlikely to increase dramatically; the non-university private sector is small and transient. The focus of many organisations in this sector changes often, and they do not concentrate on increasing or building their capacity. These organisations have been labelled 'suitcase providers' because they change sector and focus so often.

Private education providers in the non-university sector have traditionally catered for the poor in this country. As is the case in Brazil, well-off young people go to good public schools or private schools, and are then able to access more affordable public universities. Poorer students generally attend lower-quality schools and after school often end up in weak, private institutions. Furthermore, the private providers are situated mainly in urban areas, meaning that the rural poor have very little access to any form of higher learning.

However, the expansion of private providers can be beneficial, and not all are transient. The government should not see private higher education providers as a threat. Furthermore, the government should also concentrate on strengthening its own institutions and schools. The quality of education is as uneven in the public sector as it is in the private sector.

The diversification of provision is also needed, and this is where the private sector can play a big role. The hostile regulatory environment is a problem, with many private providers being pushed out of the sector because of onerous regulatory requirements.

The South African government does not do much today to encourage young people to study abroad. Of course during apartheid, a number of South Africans did go abroad to study. They were often funded by their own communities or by foreign organisations and governments. Many people in key positions of leadership in government and business studied abroad. Their skills were not produced in South Africa.

Dr Felicity Coughlan, *Director, Independent Institute of Education, Advtech Group*

In the field of education South Africa and Brazil share some interesting parallels and some fundamental differences. In Brazil the number of people attending higher education has increased dramatically, going from about 1,8 million people to about 6,6 million over a ten to twelve year period, predominantly within the private sector.

Private sector enrolments in South Africa account for only about 9 per cent of all enrolments in higher education, although these figures are unreliable.⁶ The majority are in the fields of business and commercial management, information and communication technology, and the design fields. There are only 95 fully-registered private higher education institutions in South Africa, while there are a further 21 that have provisional registration. According to a survey done in 2010 about 90 per cent of the students in private higher education are in for-profit institutions and these represent 80 per cent of all private higher education institutions. However, private higher education institutions are in general much smaller than their counterparts in the public sector. For example, in 2010 there were only three private higher education institutions

Private sector enrolments in South Africa account for only about nine per cent of all enrolments in higher education



in South Africa that enrolled more than 3 000 students. One of the key barriers to entry within this sector is onerous regulation.

This is worsened by the uneven application of regulations by the bureaucracy. There is a significant part of the sector that works outside of the regulations, citing the cost and burden of compliance and government's unclear approach to international qualifications and partnerships. There are, in other words, large numbers of unregistered private higher education institutions. It is unclear how many there are but in some sectors and some cities there could be as many as five or six unregistered institutions for every correctly registered one. In addition there is a proliferation of Colleges which do not explicitly position themselves as being within the Higher Education sector. Despite this, many of these institutions offer qualifications that appear to be Higher Education qualifications.

Another restriction on the growth of the South African private higher education industry is that unlike Brazil, we do not have a 'reserve army' of postgraduates available to teach in private higher education institutions. The data is unreliable but according to one survey only 9 per cent of the people teaching in private higher education institutions have a doctorate; 38 per cent have a Masters or honours; 20 per cent have a three year bachelor degree; and 33 per cent have a diploma.⁷

A major development within private higher education, both here and in Brazil, is the expansion of multinationals into the sector. One of the primary examples is Pearson, the leading publishing group which owns the Financial Times and Penguin Books in the UK. It is heavily invested in Brazil, through the *Sistema Educacional Brasileiro*,⁸ and owns a large part of the Computer Training Institute (CTI), which is also one of the largest private education providers in South Africa.⁹ Pearson owns similar interests in the higher education sector in seven or eight other countries. Furthermore, it has interests in other similar types of businesses, such as the printing of textbooks.

Internationally, a growing number of non-traditional educational businesses have entered the for-profit space in higher education. The countries that are seeing large-scale investment by these companies are generally developing states experiencing high growth rates. There has also been the growth of more traditional providers, such as Monash University from Australia, which invest in the private higher education sector in developing countries, but are public universities in their countries of origin.

This growing diversity raises the issue of measuring quality across the sector as a whole, which is likely to be very challenging. Another challenge is that private higher education institutions tend to concentrate on the non-laboratory based disciplines, neglecting the sciences.¹⁰ This could be because the return on investment in the teaching of the sciences is low as the set up costs are so high and without any state subsidy the fees that would need to be charged make these disciplines difficult to present within the sector.

Internationally, a growing number of non-traditional educational businesses have entered the for-profit space in higher education



Godwin Khosa, CEO, JET Education Services

There are a number of commonalities between South Africa and Brazil. For instance, Brazil has established standard assessments that cut across the various types of institutions delivering education. There are similar developments in South Africa with the introduction by government of Annual National Assessments. Another commonality relates to administrative complexities. The Brazilian system is highly complex with the responsibility of providing education being shared between the federal government, the states, and local government. In the case of South Africa, the national government is responsible for oversight policy, while the actual delivery happens at provincial level, which may be slightly less complex than Brazil but nevertheless still creates problems in South Africa.

In South Africa all schools and provinces use the same curriculum, which is not the case in Brazil. An area where South Africa could learn from Brazil is with regard to the quality of people studying to become teachers. South Africa does not sufficiently control the quality of entrants into teaching, whereas Brazilian standards are high.

When thinking about the lessons South Africa can learn from Brazil we should be thinking about gradual reform and policy tweaking rather than full-scale reform. In the recent past, when policy has not delivered the desired results the entire policy has been thrown out. However, the main problem lies with the implementation of policy, and that is what needs to be improved. The capacity of the education system has to be strengthened. A big gap currently exists between planning, programming, and the rolling out of policies between national and provincial level, and particularly between provincial and district level. South Africa needs to stop changing policy directions and start looking instead at improving capacity for the implementation of existing policies.

The shortage of post graduates in South Africa may constrain the ability of private providers to expand as rapidly as they did in Brazil

Implications for South Africa

The Brazilian experience suggests that there is much to gain and little to fear from making the post-schooling regulatory environment more accessible to private providers, including those that are for profit.

One of the most interesting initiatives of the Brazilian government is the 60 year old programme of sending thousands of bright young people to study abroad at leading universities. As nearly all of them came home with a world-class education and global experience this suggests itself as a policy that could, fairly quickly, increase the number of highly skilled and internationally competitive people in South Africa. However, there are a number of challenges that have to be overcome first. Apart from logistical issues, the policy will only work if students are selected on merit and in particular disciplines and the graduates return to work in South Africa. This happens in Brazil, but given South Africa's ongoing brain drain problem, it may not work as well here.

One of the remarkable differences between Brazil and South Africa is the extent to which Brazilian policies have created a large supply of post-graduates willing to teach in an expanding higher education



sector. This spare capacity does not exist in South Africa. The shortage of post graduates here may constrain the ability of private providers to expand as rapidly as they did in Brazil. Currently, only 9 per cent of the people teaching in South Africa's private higher education institutions have a doctorate, and this clearly has to change. In the short term, South Africa could make its skilled immigration policy more liberal (in word and deed) and entice the expertise we need for rapid expansion and quality teaching. The prolonged financial crisis in Europe and the prospect of low growth for many years to come, provides an unprecedented opportunity for South Africa to recruit skills quickly.

Expanding the size, quality and diversity of post-school education in South Africa is vitally important. Without this, it is hard to see how we meet national goals with respect to expanding the economy, developing a highly trained professional civil service across all levels of government, encouraging more business expansion and creation, reducing unemployment, and strengthening the home-grown supply of well-trained school teachers and tertiary educators.

Brazil's recent history suggests that responding to the increasing demand for post school education and training in South Africa will need to go beyond an expansion of public capacity. Private institutions can play a major role in providing access to education and training especially for those who do not qualify for entry into leading universities. For this to happen at the speed and scale that is required, the current regulatory environment and associated attitudes in the country will need to change. It is vital that the rules and regulations affecting both public and private institutions lead to 'level playing fields' and that financial assistance to students is as effective as possible and does not differentiate between the two kinds of institutions. Brazil's achievements are worthy of further consideration and investigation as to how these can be adapted for South Africa's circumstances.

Informing South African Policy



It is vital that the rules and regulations affecting both public and private institutions lead to level playing fields



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Notes

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Published in October 2012 by

The Centre for Development and Enterprise

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ISBN: 978-0-9870231-7-9

This study was funded by the
UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Prosperity Fund



British
High Commission
Pretoria

The funders do not necessarily share the views expressed in this report.