

South-South Programme

Building a South-South coalition on foundational learning
through education exchange and evidence synthesis



Learning tasks

Brazil: Sobral/Campos

This document outlines pedagogical activities connected to a case study and podcast about Sobral and Campos dos Goytacazes, in Brazil, and their efforts to bring in a series of reforms to improve foundational learning. Though focused on those municipalities, the materials are an opportunity for reflection for different countries in the Global South that face similar challenges.

Use this script as a guide, but feel free to explore and expand those themes in whatever direction is relevant to your own context. We strongly encourage these learning tasks to be done as a group, but they can also be done individually. There is no right or wrong answer, but don't shy away from challenging assumptions and ideas and directing participants to do the same.

The developers of these documents are eager to understand how your experience was using this document. Please write to lemann.foundation@bsg.ox.ac.uk with your questions and comments.

Instructions

If you are doing this exercise in a group: please jump to page 03.

If you are doing this individually, please follow the self-guided study strategy:

Self-guided study strategy

(Suggested time: 90 minutes)

Design thinking is an innovative problem-solving approach that focuses on human-centered solutions. It is particularly suitable for self-guided study because it encourages empathy, experimentation, and collaboration, which can lead to deeper understanding and more effective solutions. In this exercise, we will use the design thinking elements of empathising, defining, ideating, prototyping, and testing to address the challenges of educational reform in the Campos dos Goytacazes municipality in Brazil.

Objective: The aim of this exercise is to help you understand and analyse the challenges of educational reform in the Campos dos Goytacazes municipality. In the case study, Marcelo Feres, the secretary of education, faces mounting resistance to his plan to close smaller schools in precarious conditions. However, he still feels that this move would be important to advance some of his priorities, such as expanding full-time schooling, professionalising management, and eliminating multigrade classes.

Instructions:

Read the full case study and complete the following exercises using design thinking principles. This exercise is designed for individual self-guided study, so take your time to reflect on each question and jot down your thoughts.

1. Empathise (20 minutes): Understand the needs and perspectives of stakeholders.

Goal: Gain insight into the needs, motivations, and challenges of the stakeholders involved in the educational reform process.

- a) List the main concerns and goals of Marcelo Feres as the secretary of education.
- b) Identify the key stakeholders in the Campos context and their perspectives on the proposed educational reforms.

2. Define (15 minutes): Frame the problem.

Goal: Clearly articulate the main problem that needs to be addressed through educational reform.

- a) Based on your understanding of the case, define the main problem Marcelo Feres is facing.
- b) Outline the primary goals he aims to achieve through educational reform.

3. Ideate (20 minutes): Generate possible solutions.

Goal: Brainstorm a wide range of potential solutions to address the main problem and achieve the goals.

- a) Brainstorm at least three possible solutions to address the main problem and achieve the goals.
- b) For each solution, consider its feasibility, potential impact, and possible resistance from stakeholders.

4. Prototype (20 minutes): Develop a detailed plan.

Goal: Create a concrete, actionable plan for implementing the chosen solution, considering potential obstacles and ways to overcome them.

- a) Choose one of the solutions from the ideation phase and create a step-by-step plan for its implementation.
- b) Identify potential obstacles and ways to overcome them.

5. Test (15 minutes): Evaluate the potential outcomes and iterate.

Goal: Reflect on the potential outcomes of the chosen solution, consider stakeholder feedback, and identify possible improvements or adjustments.

- a) Reflect on the potential outcomes of your chosen solution and its impact on the stakeholders.
- b) Consider potential improvements or adjustments to the plan based on potential feedback from stakeholders.

Reflection questions (10 minutes):

1. What insights did you gain from empathising with different stakeholders and considering their perspectives during the problem-solving process?
2. How can the principles applied in this exercise be used to address other educational reform challenges or in your own personal or professional context?

Take your time to reflect on each question and jot down your thoughts. Remember to review your notes periodically, as these can be valuable for further reflection and analysis.

Group exercise guide

(Suggested time: 1 hour)

If this is a self-organised group, please pick someone to act as a moderator. When the group is first gathered, take some time to recall the major themes of the materials before jumping into the first discussion or dividing into groups.

Question 01 (15 minutes)

Suggestion for moderator: after reading the task below, ask for volunteers to bring options to the plenary. Then hold an informal vote on the two possible options.

In the end of the case study, Marcelo Feres, secretary of education in Campos, finds himself facing mounting resistances to his plan to close smaller schools in precarious conditions.

However, he still feels that move would be important to advance some of his priorities, like expanding full-time schooling, professionalising management and eliminating multigrade classes. Now, he must decide on what to do next.

- a) What do you see as the ways forward for Feres? Name at least two possibilities.

(Participants may not bring full answers, but pre-conditions for any route forward, such as guaranteeing political support, engaging the community etc. so push for concrete answers as to what Marcelo needs to do right away: go ahead with closing the schools or retreat?)

- b) Which of these options would you choose, and why?

Question 02 (30 minutes)

Suggestion for moderator: for the task below, separate the participants into at least two smaller groups for the discussion and monitor the groups to inject energy or ideas into the conversations, and to help them avoid getting stuck on one aspect of the question.

Here are five measures taken by the Sobral city administration over the years to improve foundational learning.

- A. Setting up a teacher training centre.
- B. Installing a meritocratic recruitment process for principals and teachers.
- C. Improving school infrastructure
- D. Establishing incentives (monetary and otherwise) for the best schools and teachers.
- E. Assess levels of student learning.

If you were to sequence these measures over time in a specific order, from 1-5, how would you do it? Justify your answer considering both the logical and political dimensions.

Now do a draw to choose one of the measures to be taken off the list.

Consider:

- a) Does the same sequencing make sense without this measure?
- b) What would be easier or harder because this measure isn't there?
- c) Would you re-sequence with the absence of this measure?

Question 03 (15 minutes)

Suggestion for moderator: *keep the participants separated in at least two smaller groups for the discussion, and then monitor the groups to inject energy or ideas into the conversations, and to help them avoid getting stuck on one aspect of the question. Next, bring the participants back to plenary and ask for volunteers to share their thoughts, following up with an open discussion.*

Now choose one of these five measures, and reflect on:

- d) Who is likely to support or oppose this measure in your city or community, and what would be their reasons and arguments?
- e) How would you go about getting their support or softening their resistance?