

 **Case Study**

Case Study for the Ashoka
Globalizer Online Course “How to
Influence the Way People Think
to Change How Society Works”



SCHOOL EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: *towards a world where young people are changemakers*



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What this case study is about

Ashoka envisions a world in which *everyone has the confidence, capacity and access to co-lead solutions for the common good* – based on empathy and respect to all humans and nature.

Approaching this “Everyone a Changemaker” vision requires changes *in systems that shape people’s identities and skills* throughout life. One of the key systems among them is *the education system*.

In 2014 the Ashoka Brazil team embarked on building a movement to transform the education system in Brazil, so that *schools become an environment that motivates and supports young people to participate and contribute to solving problems for the good of all*. To prepare the ground for structural changes in the education system, the leaders of the movement have been working to first influence mental models of key stakeholders in the system. The goal has been to *activate the demand for the new model of education* that actively promotes and supports changemaking.

By offering a *new narrative on the purpose of education*, identifying and connecting key potential *drivers of the new narrative* in the system, supporting and showcasing *precedents of changemaker education* across the country and building *capacity of the “co-lead community”*, the Ashoka Brazil team has been laying a solid foundation for the changemaker education approach to penetrate the most important institutions of the education system in Brazil, thus setting it up to change the broader paradigm in the country.

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The Problem

In a world defined by an increasing pace of change and level of interconnection, societies are becoming confronted by a growing number of complex challenges. Addressing these challenges effectively requires the empathy, engagement and creativity of *citizens of all ages and backgrounds*, in particular young people.

Nonetheless, most young people do not receive adequate motivation or support to build their changemaking skills: *conscious empathy, leading through collaboration and taking action* to solve problems or create opportunities for the common good.

Schools, a key player that *could* motivate and support people to become changemakers from an early age, *are often not taking up this role and not providing this type of education.*

Instead, educational institutions tend to use top-down processes and frontal teaching styles that are more likely to *disempower* young people, suppress their initial curiosity and even turn them away from schools altogether.

In fact, in Brazil out of 33 million young people aged 15-24 currently every fourth person is not *in education, employment or training*. The absolute leader among the reasons for school absenteeism, far ahead of lack of school places, learning materials or money to pay for tuition, is “*no interest in studying*”¹.



1. [Out-of-school children in Brazil](#), UNICEF 2021

Causes of the problem

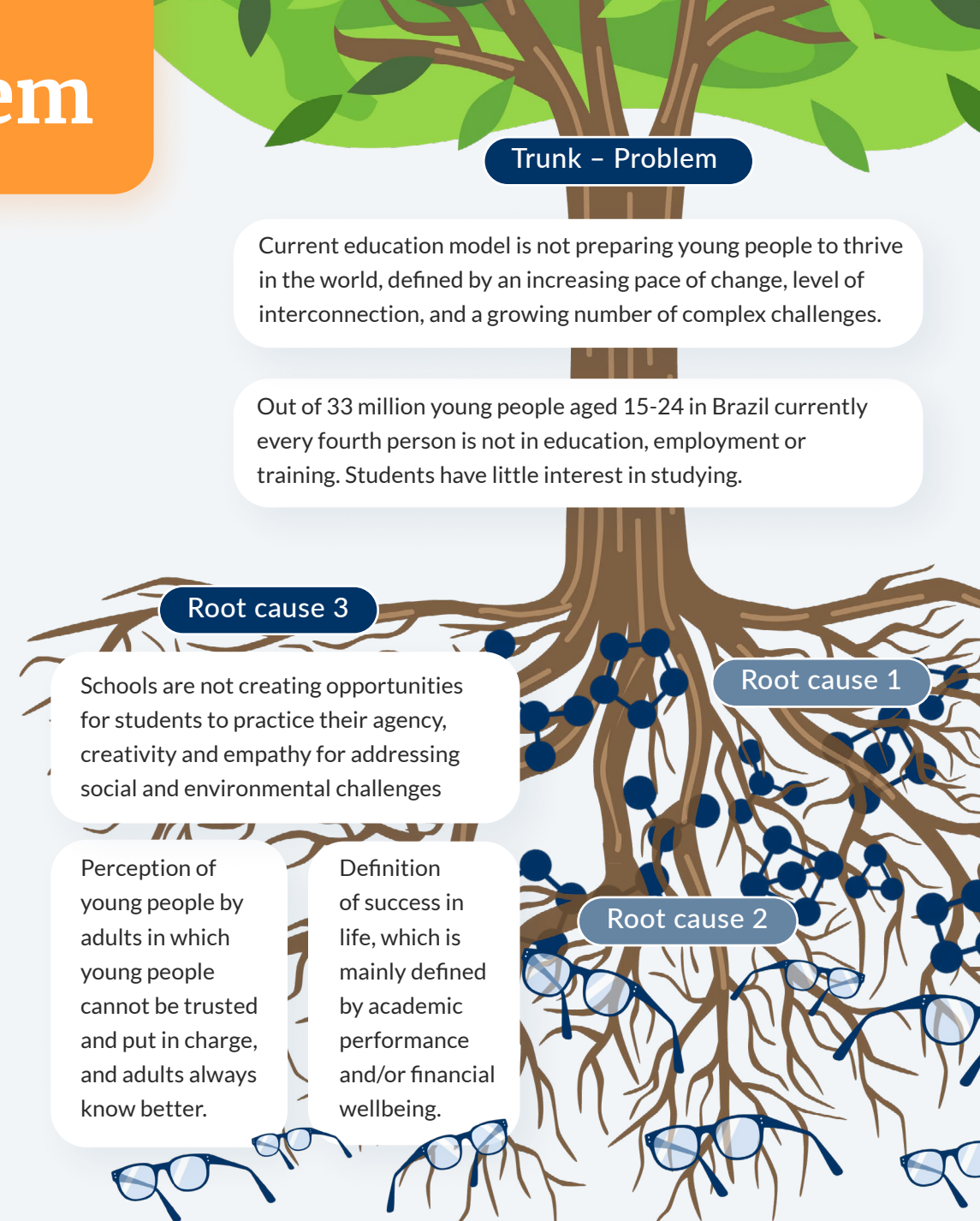
Ashoka believes that there is a direct correlation between students having no interest in studying and schools *not creating opportunities for students to practice their agency, creativity and empathy for addressing social and environmental challenges* the world faces, as well as not helping students see how the knowledge they gain and relationships they build at school can be of help in this process.

What underlies the currently predominant top-down model at schools, where children are not given ample space to voice their opinions and participate, are *established systems based on certain mental models*.

One widespread mental model is a particular *perception of young people by adults* in which young people cannot be trusted and put in charge, and adults always know better.

Another mental model is about the *definition of success in life*, which is mainly defined by academic performance and/or financial wellbeing. This perception, reinforced by current university and job admissions criteria, on the one hand, and mainstream public messaging, on the other hand, leaves agency, empathy and changemaking skills out of the equation.

These two mental models combined *perpetuate disempowering structures* in the education systems around the world, including those in Brazil.

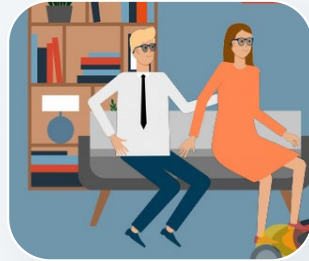


Cycle of demand

STATUS
QUO



As **business, media and mainstream culture** often signal academic performance as a leading factor of success, schools develop processes and grading that help monitor its progress.



This shapes demand on the side of the **parents** who select and judge schools for their children according to the academic track-record. This demand, in turn, activates the following cycle of demand within the educational system:



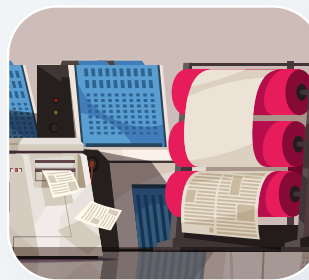
Schools direct their resources to delivering academic results, often not providing enough learning opportunities for students to develop agency, empathy and changemaking skills;



Teachers, in striving to deliver academic results, adhere to frontal teaching and don't give enough space in their lessons for young people to exercise their creativity and autonomy;



Government agencies distribute funding to schools according to their academic successes, reinforcing the cycle.



Publishers develop most methodological materials focusing on academic performance and little on agency and empathy-based changemaking;



Education schools prepare future teachers in line with schools' expectations of academic objectives;



Teachers' Unions do not advocate for measures that could help teachers better support students as changemakers.

Cycle of demand



Ashoka's hypothesis is that the key to creating an engaging environment for young people at school, one that enables them to be active contributors to society, is a significant *shift in thinking and behavior of educators and other stakeholders of the education system*. And what can bring it about is the demand for the new type of education, focused on empathy-based changemaking, simultaneously exercised by representatives of each system stakeholder.

If **media, business and government** expanded the definition of success beyond academic performance and included empathy-based changemaking as part of it,

if **government** supported the infrastructure to enable it, such as by creating new curricular standards and evaluation systems,

then **parents and young people** themselves would start choosing and assessing schools differently - based on the provision of both academic results and empathy-based changemaking skills;

Schools would start competing for best pedagogical staff able to teach with focus on empathy-based changemaking.

This would create demand for **education schools** to adjust their curriculum and seek out changemaker-focused methodological materials from publishers.

Teacher unions, in turn, would advocate for infrastructural and methodological changes that allow teachers to devote more time to developing empathy-based changemaking in their students and shifting from frontal

learning, and helping society shift their perception of the social role of education professionals.

Government, seeing the increasing public demand, would consequently direct more resources to support such schools, thus creating incentives for more schools to shift their priorities.



Demonstrating that change is possible

Changemaker Schools Brazil

Schools able to deliver *both* empathy-based changemaking skills and academic results already exist in Brazil. Ashoka calls them “[Changemaker Schools](#)”, and by profound screening, it identified them both among public and private institutions, in regions varying in the levels of socio-economic development, and among schools using different teaching methodologies, which speaks for the *broad applicability* of the changemaker education approach*.



Amigos do Verde School



Associação Pró-Educação Vivendo e Aprendendo



Community School Luiza Mahin



EMEF Desembargador Amorim Lima

*Ashoka understands Changemaker Education as the act of cultivating learning environments based on the values and practice of conscious empathy, teamwork, creativity and shared leadership, to enable everyone to take creative action and thrive as changemakers for the common good.



The main change has happened to my worldview. I have received a very traditional, rigid education. And before this change, I demanded silence in all activities, students had to walk in line and could not object to anything. Everyone obeyed me, but out of fear, not respect. I learned to see that a better, more open and democratic relationship with students greatly influences learning and the feeling of belonging. I feel that the environment now is lighter, happier, more colorful, and this has impact on the mood of employees, teachers, everyone. Families are much more present, participating in the school routine. We have shared management, I am not alone in the decisions. We also maintain horizontal relationships with parents, employees and children. This is how we build education with respect, love, by creating bonds.

Lucia Cristina Cortez, school principal at Waldir Garcia School in Manaus



In addition to teaching the content of subjects, the school helps us to perceive what is wrong in society and change our reality for the common good.

Jordania de Souza, Student at Alan Pinho Tabosa State School in Pentecoste (Ceará)



Demonstrating that change is possible

Ashoka Young Changemakers

Along with the schools which managed to center their educational process around the values and practice of conscious empathy, teamwork, creativity, shared leadership and changemaking, there are, of course, examples of young people themselves who already in their age personify the idea of changemaking.

The [Ashoka Young Changemakers](#) program has set off to source inspirational stories of young people around the world who have already found their power to create change for the good of all across the world. In addition to highlighting the role-models of youth changemaking, the program also aims to build bridges among these young people and invite them to become co-leaders of the global Everyone a Changemaker movement.



Narrative Environment



Let's now *trace the roots of existing mental models* responsible for the status quo in the educational system.

As with every topic, there is an abundance of channels which together constitute the narrative environment for people and transmit mental models to people's psyche – *own family experiences, lived reality of school rules, university and job admissions, movies, TV shows, news, opinions of celebrities and influencers, books, laws* and many others.

One key commonality in the stories of the last decades and even centuries has been *the way success is illustrated* – high paying salaries and becoming celebrities, with empathy, agency and changemaking not typically held up as success.

Another commonality is that *young people have rarely been presented in the roles of those who care about problems, make decisions and take action* to address them, in other words, protagonists, creative and autonomous actors contributing to the common good. Young people have often been portrayed as those who *need to be protected and whose heads need to be filled* with information by wise parents and teachers. It is important to add that these patterns have been further reinforced by the *lack of young people among the sources* for such stories, for example, for the news outlets or within the film production teams, and the *lack of accessible means for their self-expression*.

STORIES & EXPERIENCES

Own family experiences, lived reality of school rules, university and job admissions, movies, TV shows, news, opinions of celebrities and influencers, books, laws

COMMONALITIES IN STORIES

Success = high paying salaries and becoming celebrities. Empathy, agency and changemaking not typically held up as success.

Young people rarely presented in the roles of protagonists, i.e. those who care about problems, make decisions and take action to address them. Often portrayed as those who need to be protected and whose heads need to be filled with information by wise parents and teachers.

Young people rarely among the sources of stories.



Narrative Environment



The targeted narrative environment would bring young people, their priorities and capabilities to the forefront – both as the *sources* of stories and protagonists thereof. In the new narrative, young people show themselves and are shown as those who *have the interest and ability to solve problems* if adults actively give them the *space, tools and confidence*. And in this narrative the success people are striving for and are proud of would be defined through one's ability to practice empathy and respect to humans and nature in action.

Collecting and broadly communicating compelling *stories about young people as changemakers and about youth changemaking experience of successful adults* thus becomes one of the central building blocks of the new narrative environment. This is the reason Ashoka started to [collect and share real-life stories](#) on early changemaking from all parts of the world.

STORIES & EXPERIENCES



Stories of Young Changemakers

Great changemakers start in their youth. This collection of stories shine a light on great changemakers who have led young and practiced early changemaking.

Please note: this playlist features stories from around the world in English or with English subtitles. Please press "cc" for your preferred viewing.

Learn more at leadyoung.ashoka.org

- 1 **Entenda como a juventude co-lidera um mundo de pessoas que transformam!**
Ashoka Brasil
- 2 **Stories of Young Changemakers**
Ashoka
- 3 **Ashoka Young Changemaker - Disha Shah**
Ashoka India
- 4 **#JovensTransformadores - Luan Torres - Projeto CASA/Arbo (PE)**
Ashoka Brasil
- 5 **Manat's Changemaker Journey**
Ashoka
- 6 **Ashoka Young Changemaker - Sanjana Dixit**
Ashoka India



Building the movement (1/3)

Ashoka Brazil launched its efforts to build a movement for the empathy-based changemaker education in 2014. The goal has been to catalyze *changes in mental models* of stakeholders in the system and *activate the targeted cycle of demand*, which should consequently bring about changes in tangible structures of the education system and beyond.

Establishing the core of the movement

The stakeholders that Ashoka invited to join the movement at the initial stage have been those *open to the ideas* of changemaker education and those who *have already had own experience* with it. By identifying and bringing together these *innovators and early adopters* of changemaking education, Ashoka has formed a core “co-lead community” united by trust in *young people*, alignment on *empathy-based changemaking skills as one of the most critical factors of success* in this rapid-changing world, and *the understanding of a special role schools and families play in creating an enabling environment* to unfold changemaking potential of young people. All these are the pillars of Ashoka’s “Everyone a Changemaker” vision.

The members of the “co-lead community” have been *eager to connect*, *learn from each other’s best practice*, *further experiment in their fields*, *expand the support base for this type of education within their own organizations*, *share experience* among their peers, and play the role of social proof for the broader community.



Building the movement (2/3)

This initial circle of “co-lead community” consisted of a selected group of *young people, teachers and principals of changemaker schools from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, social entrepreneurs, citizen-sector leaders, and the Ashoka Brazil team itself.*

Later the circle was expanded to include several dozen other stakeholders with significant leverage within the education system, i.e. representatives of *education schools preparing teachers, publishers responsible for textbooks, largest national media, state and municipal governments, teacher unions, parents and diverse education experts.* The community continues to grow with new influential leaders coming onboard as well.

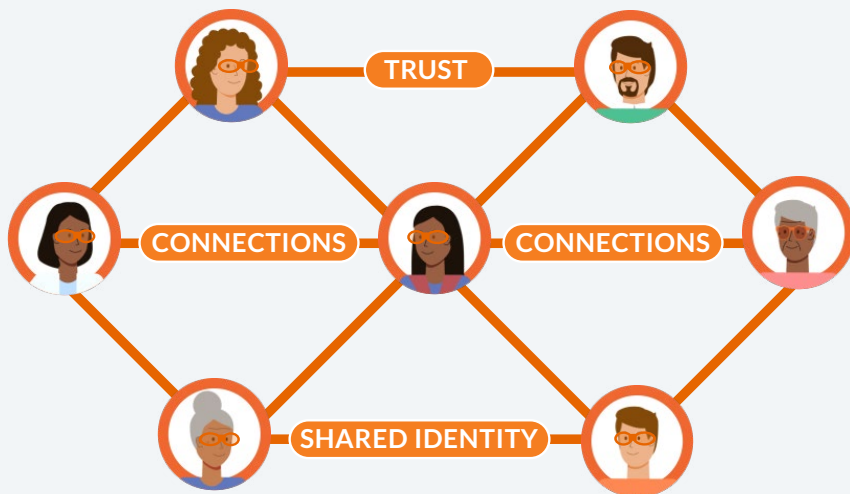
Recognizing the vast scale of the country and the necessity to showcase the possibility of change in the education system in different contexts, Ashoka Brazil is now carefully cultivating such “co-lead communities” in 9 metropolises, or “hot spots”, strategically selected out of over 5.700 cities spread in 27 states in Brazil. The metropolises of Manaus and São Paulo, and the state of Bahia are the geographies where the efforts on building “co-lead community” have yielded the most advanced results to date.



Building the movement (3/3)

Cultivating connections, trust and shared identity within the “co-lead community”

Upon creating the “co-lead community”, Ashoka Brazil has been *cultivating connections, trust and shared identity* among its members, gradually enlarging the circle. Diverse offline and online meetings and experiences have been an important tool for strengthening the core. One of the most effective formats has been the “*changemaker journeys*” with members of the community visiting best-practice changemaker education institutions across the country and collectively developing ideas for improvement in their home areas, while increasing their leadership power in the movement for empathy-based changemaker education in Brazil.



Individualized capacity-building support to movement members

Parallel to cultivating connections and shared identity within the group, the Ashoka Brazil Team has been providing *individual support* to members of the “co-lead community” as well. The goal has been that these stakeholders *develop leadership capacity* to implement new education principles in practice. In doing so, Ashoka also learns and further improves our joint strategy and design of our initiatives.

By adopting the principles of changemaker education in their own realms, stakeholders of the education system demonstrate successful precedents, or anecdotes, of change to the rest of the system. These can attract interest of their peers and *turn on the positive competition dynamics* among them. If multiple organizations replicate the precedent, it can grow to be a trend, a driving force for *social demand* and ultimately a *justification and blueprint* for changing how the majority of institutions operate across the country.

Examples on the implementation of changemaker education principles by system stakeholders that we present below include a story of a major publisher producing a textbook on empathy-based changemaking, an education school adding changemaker education into the curriculum for future teachers, or a major newspaper including young people into the pool of their sources.

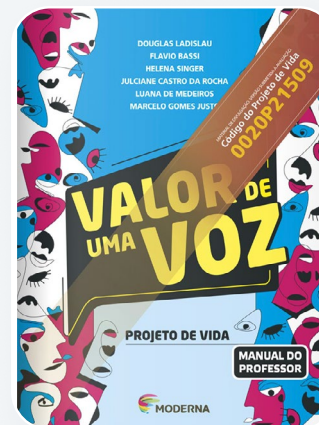
Supporting the “co-lead community” (1/3)

A textbook on changemaking

Recognizing the extent to which *textbooks* and *exercises* shape narratives in classrooms and define teachers' behavior and relationships with students, the Ashoka Brazil Team has partnered with *Santillana*, one of the *biggest publishers in Brazil*, and written a government-approved textbook for a subject called “life-project” in Brazilian schools. The very existence of this new subject is a result of the engagement of several members of the Ashoka community with the Ministry of Education. In this subject, students map activities that help them prepare for grown-up life. The textbook offers opportunities to explore what empathy-based changemaking means and, most importantly, to get to know real-life examples of young changemakers, while also providing practical exercises to develop their own changemaker skills. This textbook has sold to date more than 150,000 copies (plus 1,800 accompanying teacher manuals) and is already being adopted by some Brazilian schools, reaching an estimate of half a million students in all three years of high school. The total potential audience constitutes around 3 million students. Having seen high interest in this textbook, the movement members have developed and published two more books – one targeted at school managers on how to transform their schools into changemaking environments, and another in digital format for teachers). More books are expected to be published soon.

Changemaking as part of the management support to schools

In a similar vein, Ashoka supported Santillana in the design of a support platform for a market composed of 9.000 small and medium private schools in Brazil. The team has helped the publisher position their platform as a place that will not only help schools manage their business, but also help bring positive impact to their communities. By shifting the perception of what doing good for communities means - from corporate responsibility projects without activating agency of students to initiating student-led community projects, the Ashoka Brazil team might well have laid the foundation for activating an additional 900.000 estimated student changemakers of this schools' network.



The cover of the textbook «[The value of your voice](#)» co-developed by the Ashoka Brazil team to advance changemaking. There have been 150.000+ copies sold to date with overall potential of reaching 3 million students.

Supporting the “co-lead community” (2/3)

Changemaking as part of curriculum for future teachers

The Team has also been working with *Sumaré*, a renowned education school in Brazil, and developed a course syllabus on changemaking for future teachers. This 6-month course, along with practical implementation of community-benefit projects, has now become mandatory for all students pursuing a teaching career. In addition, the management team of Sumaré has adopted several *changes to their internal processes*, so that the organization may grow into a changemaking institution itself. The school has now assigned 6 professors as ambassadors of changemaking, publicly defined its mission as “Educating for Changemaking Mindset” and is actively engaging with community on this topic, e.g. by organizing townhall viewing of TV series on youth changemaking. Sumaré has also adopted a new system by which their students are encouraged to create solutions to address social and educational challenges in their communities, using the tools and knowledge gained from their courses, with evaluation and credit being granted upon completion. This course and new system has helped Sumaré improve its ratings and gain more public recognition for its pioneering work.

Given the benefits that this strategic shift has brought to Sumaré in terms of ratings and interest to their work from the broader public and authorities, Ashoka expects other education schools to follow the model.

Young changemakers as news sources for established media

Another example of individual engagement with stakeholders has been Ashoka’s collaboration with *one of the biggest newspapers in Brazil, Folha de São Paulo*, counting as many as 1.5 billion views per month. Discussions with the newspaper management and one of their online platforms, UOL, have led to the *inclusion of young changemakers into their pool of sources* for news and stories, thus altering and diversifying the established system of news sourcing. Youth changemaking has also become one of the more visible topics in their *internal journalist training*. In addition to working with written media, there is also *engagement underway with big TV channels* like GNT and Globo TV (the largest media conglomerate in Brazil) for the joint production of series and events featuring young changemakers.



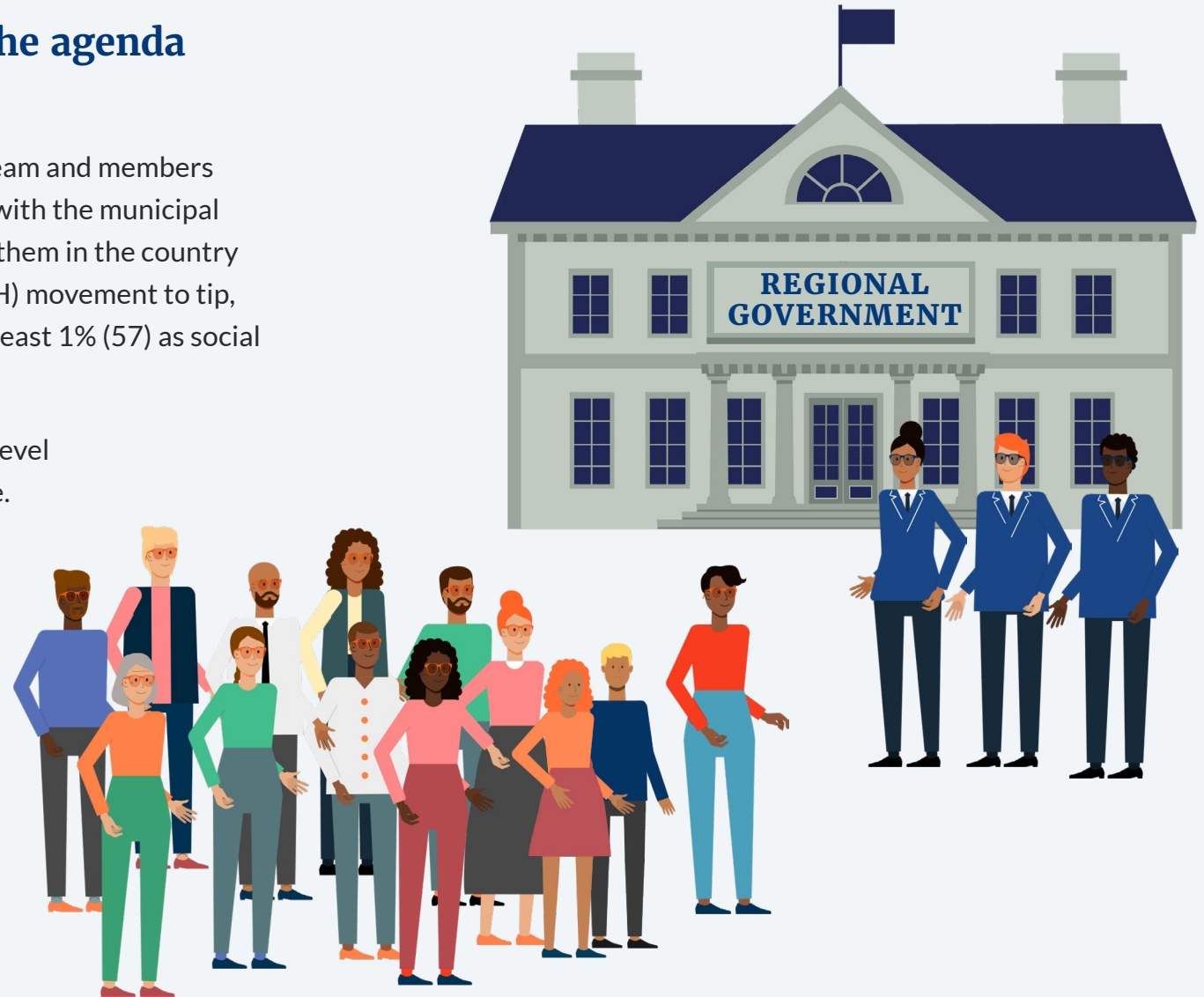
Supporting the “co-lead community” (3/3)

Changemaker education on the agenda of regional authorities

Parallel to these efforts, the Ashoka Brazil Team and members of local “co-lead communities” are engaging with the municipal secretaries of education. There are 5.700 of them in the country and for the Everyone A Change Maker (EACH) movement to tip, Ashoka estimates that it needs to engage at least 1% (57) as social demand partners.

So far, at least 90 of them have shown some level of interest and are part of the team’s pipeline.

The goal is to support this critical mass in designing and implementing measures to advance changemaking education at the regional level. The presence of aligned communities on the ground *ensures continuity* of commitment to this topic even when personalities in the chairs of municipal secretaries change.



Crossing the chasm (1/2)

One of the key challenges for every movement is helping a new approach “cross the chasm” between the small circle of early adopters and the rest of the system.

In Ashoka’s theory of change, a key next step for bringing changemaker education beyond the several hundred members of the “co-lead community” in the country, is activating at least 1% of the audiences of each of their constituent groups .

If stakeholders who have been part of the core community manage to demonstrate the success, importance and attractiveness of the new type of education to their own audiences and offer them tools to advance a society where everyone is a changemaker from their positions, some representatives of these audiences will become role-models and social proofs to their peers, creating a rippling effect and further enlarging the movement in the country.

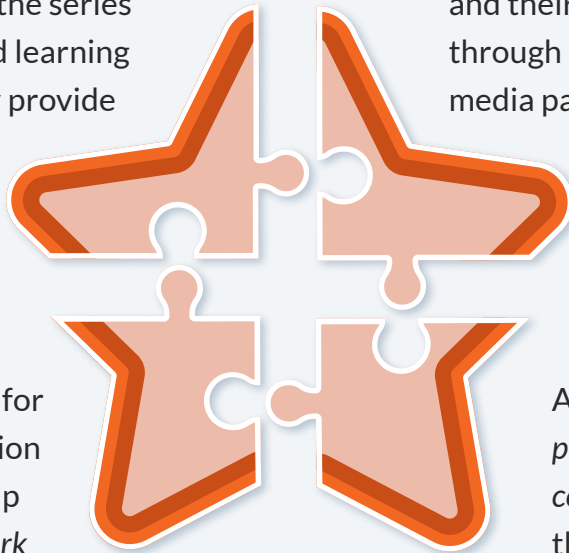


Crossing the chasm (2/2)

Ashoka has already developed some engagement tools, which it calls **Everyone a Changemaker Drivers**, to ignite the interest of the broader audience towards changemaking:

“Your Kids” workshops help parents see the importance of changemaking skills for the kids’ success in life and the series of engagement and learning opportunities they provide

A growing collection of compelling real-life stories of changemaking in youth years and their strategic distribution through national and local media partners



Opportunities for direct interaction and partnership with the network of Ashoka Young Changemakers

An online and in-person peer connection and collaboration platform for the ambassadors of the “Everyone a Changemaker” movement”

As the ambassadors of changemaker education start penetrating all types of institutions within the education system, and the awareness and willingness of change becomes more present, the next challenge for the movement is building *capacity for change*, in other words, *supporting the actual transition of the entire educational infrastructure* to new educational practices. This comprehensive endeavor includes developing detailed transition roadmaps, amending processes, curricula, textbooks, exams and grading, funding and many more topics.

As these changes sooner or later need to be embraced by the majority school principals, teachers, educational authorities, education union, textbook publishers, media, and many other players of the system, and will likely meet resistance as well, the movement will be thinking through the incentives, control mechanisms and self-correcting decision-making architecture for this all-encompassing implementation.



Conclusion

The movement for changemaker education initiated in 2014 in Brazil is gaining traction and influential supporters. The Ashoka team, together with partners, has invested significant energy in identifying and connecting key potential drivers of the new narrative in the system from among all system stakeholders.

By re-defining the purpose of education in the modern world, by supporting and showcasing precedents of changemaker education across the country and by connecting, enlarging and building the capacity of the “co-lead community”, the movement builders have been laying solid foundation for the *changemaker education approach to penetrate the most important institutions of the education system in Brazil.*

And once embedded in the education system and, thus, *narrative environment for a large part of society*, the “Everyone A Changemaker” vision, with the continued commitment of the movement, might gradually become *a new norm for the entire Brazilian society.*



Join the “Everyone a Changemaker” movement



Flavio Bassi

a global Leadership Group
Member of Ashoka,
head of Ashoka’s Empathy
and Childhood strategy



We see great power in unlocking young people’s ability to act as changemakers. It is not simply meant to address the emerging needs of a job market in transition or to add a new skill set to the current education system. It’s about creating new possibilities of existence.

If you feel inspired by Ashoka’s efforts to help education systems support young people in becoming changemakers, join our global “Everyone a Changemaker” movement.

[Reach out to Flavio Bassi](#) to support Ashoka’s pioneering work in Brazil or bring these efforts to your country.



Sources



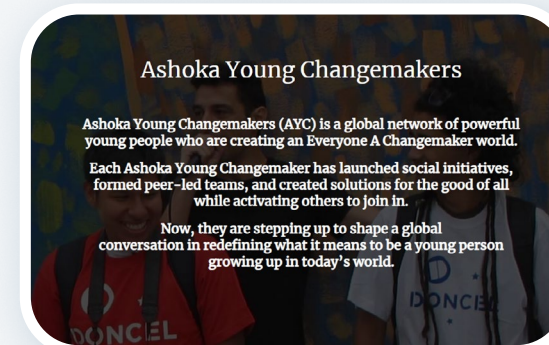
6 Zoom conversations and email exchange with [Flavio Bassi](#), a global Leadership Group Member of Ashoka, Vice President of Ashoka in Latin America, head of Ashoka's Empathy and Childhood strategy – January 2021-September 2022



[Stories of Early Changemaking](#)



[Website of Ashoka Changemaker Schools in Brazil](#)



[Website of Ashoka Young Changemakers program](#)



The Systems Change Library of Ashoka Globalizer

If upon reading this case study and completing the course "How to influence the way people think to change how society works", you are hungry for more knowledge on systems change, we invite you to explore the library of knowledge pieces we have developed in the last years together with partners. All materials are in the public domain.

Online courses



Systems Change Masterclass

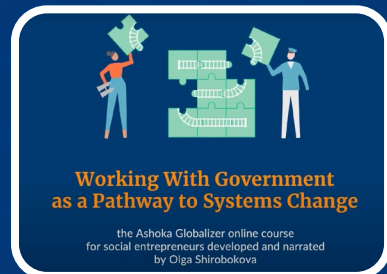
If this is your first acquaintance with systems change, you might want to first have a look at:



Short animation on systems change



Crash-course for beginners

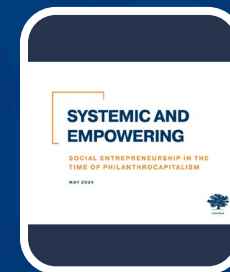


Working With Government as a Pathway to Systems Change



How to Influence the Way People Think to Change How Society Works

Reports



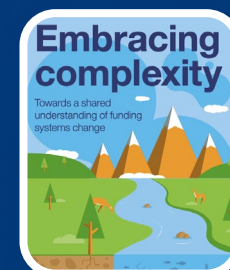
Systemic and Empowering

Real-life examples of systems changing social entrepreneurs



New Allies

How governments can unlock the potential of social entrepreneurs



Embracing Complexity

Towards a shared understanding of funding systems change

Podcast



The Systems Change Podcast

Conversations on systems change with practitioners

We hope our online course
“How to influence the way people think
to change how society works”
has been an effective help
in your changemaker journey!



Everyone A Changemaker™

About Ashoka

Ashoka introduced the term “social entrepreneur” to the world in 1980 and since then has grown to be a leading global network of social entrepreneurs — people with effective systems-changing ideas for the common good, strong ethical fiber, entrepreneurial spirit and creativity, who commit their lives to tackling social and environmental problems. Every year we get to know thousands of changemakers across the world. Over a hundred of them who meet Ashoka’s criteria of a social entrepreneur and pass our rigorous selection process, become life-long Ashoka Fellows. What Ashoka offers to them is thought partnership in refining their ideas and strategies, a living stipend and, most importantly, connection to a vibrant network of 4000 peer social entrepreneurs and thousands of changemakers in business, government, media, education and citizen sector who help advance their ideas for the common good. Together with this network, Ashoka is building toward an “Everyone a Changemaker” world: where all of us have the confidence, access and support to co-lead solutions for the common good.

About Ashoka Globalizer

Founded in 2010, Globalizer is Ashoka’s prime accelerator program that has supported over 370 Ashoka Fellows across the globe in developing their systems change strategies and opening up for collective action, rather than growing up for collective action, rather than growing up for collective action, rather than growing up for collective action. In 2018, complementing its accelerator program, Globalizer established the Systems Unit with the aim to capture and analyze learnings Ashoka Fellows make on their journey to systems change and share them with the interested changemakers in the form of engaging knowledge products. Several online courses, reports and a podcast, all covering different dimensions of systems change, have seen the world as a result.

About Olga Shirobokova

A diplomat by training, Olga has played multiple roles in Ashoka’s national, regional and global programs since she joined the organization in 2012 — from search and selection of Ashoka Fellows, launching the country office and co-developing a national support ecosystem for social entrepreneurs in the Czech Republic, to being a thought partner on systems change for over 40 Ashoka Fellows across Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. Today, while continuing to support Fellows in developing systems change strategies within the Globalizer accelerator, Olga also co-leads Globalizer’s Systems Unit where, based on the distilled wisdom of Ashoka Fellows and her own diverse changemaker experience, she develops knowledge products for social entrepreneurs and the broader worldwide ecosystem.