The 2018 AERA theme is The Dreams, Possibilities, and Necessity of Public Education. What can be the promise of public schools and how does—or should—educational change bring us closer to such a promise?

Brazil is a large country with more than two hundred million people including the population in Brazil's remote areas. There is incredible diversity in Brazil due to its long history of drawing immigrants and people from around the globe. We have more than two hundred native Indian nations. The diversity makes Brazil a great country and offers us challenges for teaching to all populations. One of our biggest challenges is a lack of a national teacher training system, and in turn, some devaluation of the teaching profession. In this context, there lies opportunity for public policy to engage in national large-scale teacher training that works to alleviate the inequalities in opportunity among some student populations.

In 2012, the Brazilian government has collaborated with several public universities to create the National Pact for Literacy (Pacto Nacional pela Alfabetização na Idade Certa—PNAIC). The objective of PNAIC was to create a network for and of primary school teachers. To reach all 300 thousand elementary teachers in Brazil, university Professors were paired up with 25 tutors each working with groups of 25 teachers on specific didactical materials. The intention of this work structure was to increase the quality of literacy training for our educators. Over time, this policy aims to increase educational opportunity for all students.

Given your work as the coordinator of Pacto Nacional pela Alfabetização na Idade Certa, what do you see to be some important contributions of this work to educational change?
PNAIC is a complex public policy, which includes four main dimensions: (1) evaluation, (2) mobilization and administration of scholarship, (3) dissemination of materials for teachers and students, (4) teacher training.

PNAIC involves all the literacy teachers from all public schools in Brazil. There are about three hundred thousand teachers. Thirty-nine public universities around the country work with tutors from more than five thousand cities. The tutors work with our literacy teachers for more than one hundred hours a year.

The teachers take a course that is based on publicly available materials (link available at: http://pacto.mec.gov.br/materiais-listagem/itemlist/category/3-cadernos-do-pnaic). These materials were developed by experienced researchers from diverse fields such as education, literacy, educational psychology, and mathematics education. The materials include didactical tools that are implemented throughout the different regions of Brazil. During the course, teachers learn about how to create pedagogical sequences using these materials, how to use games to enhance numeracy and literacy, how to utilize and build on technology, and how to cultivate and foster readers to promote literacy and numeracy among all students.

All of the teacher participants receive a scholarship and have to fill monthly online reports about their schools and the progress of their students. These reports comprise the data that are used by the researchers to rework and promote necessary changes in the project. In my view, the design of PNAIC is one of the more important contributions to the field of educational change.

Given your focus on education in general and on literacy in particular, what are some major lessons we can learn from your experience with Brazil’s PNAIC educational reform and your contributions to global educational reforms?

We can learn much from both our local and global educational changes and reforms. From the extant research in the educational change field, we know that our national and international educational problems are real and very complex.

In Brazil, this complexity includes not only cognitive aspects but social aspects as well as teacher training policies, mobilization and administration of scholarship, adequacy of school buildings, and the valorization of the teaching profession. To achieve the promise of equal educational opportunity, we need to create large-scale programs, which consider all, or at least most, of these aspects. I believe that this will require much learning and training. I also believe this will be our biggest challenge.

Unfortunately, the PNAIC is catered, for now, only to elementary teachers. Our expectation is to expand the project to include all teachers. For now, a growing number of scholarly work focuses on the project to highlight what works and what does not work. Now, for example, we know that some remote and small towns need more attention.
This requires the promotion of specific projects for them. PNAIC, in other words, is dynamic and it shapes and is shaped by field work.

*Young people today (students) are the focus of educational change for improvement. From your perspective, what are the key needs of young people at this time and what might the field of educational change prioritize in order to meet these needs?*

I believe that one of the most important needs for our students today and for students of future generations is to obtain a comprehensively deep literacy. This multilevel and multidimensional literacy needs to be taught and practiced by all the students regardless socioeconomic or cultural differences. This literacy involves all knowledge areas, such as mathematics, human sciences, nature sciences, arts, etc., and has to provide to all people the ability to more critically read and understand the world.

With the PNAIC initiative, Brazil decided to prioritize literacy for children. We also cannot forget Brazil’s other problems in education so the educational change focus overall essentially needs to be broader to encompass deep thinking and critical treatment of what we already know and what is still left to be learned.

*What do you think are the most important educational change issues today? What excites you about the educational change field today?*

We are experiencing many changes in global education and I believe that these changes are fundamentally good as they gradually, however slowly, ensure better accessibility for education for all. But unfortunately, school systems take too long to incorporate these changes into long-term sustainable routines.

In terms of technology, for example, PNAIC is promoting numerous study sites where it not only demonstrates how to use videos and other materials but also how subject areas are interrelated. See, for instance, the video called *Teacher’s Goncalo’s Fabulous Collection* (available at [https://tvescola.mec.gov.br/tve/videoteca-series!loadSerie?vlSerie=fabulosascolecoes&clearBreadCrumb=true&](https://tvescola.mec.gov.br/tve/videoteca-series!loadSerie?vlSerie=fabulosascolecoes&clearBreadCrumb=true&)).

My job and research in the context of the education system in Brazil is aimed to assist school systems to incorporate the PNAIC reform into their own pedagogical practices, including utilizing technology and different methodologies as well as promoting effective curriculum changes.
EMERSON ROLKOUSKI

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Professor Rolkouski currently coordinates the National Pact for Literacy (Pacto Nacional pela Alfabetização na Idade Certa—PNAIC) in Brazil and was the lead editor and creator in PNAIC.