

Secondary education and the future demands of the labor market in Brazil

Simon Schwartzman

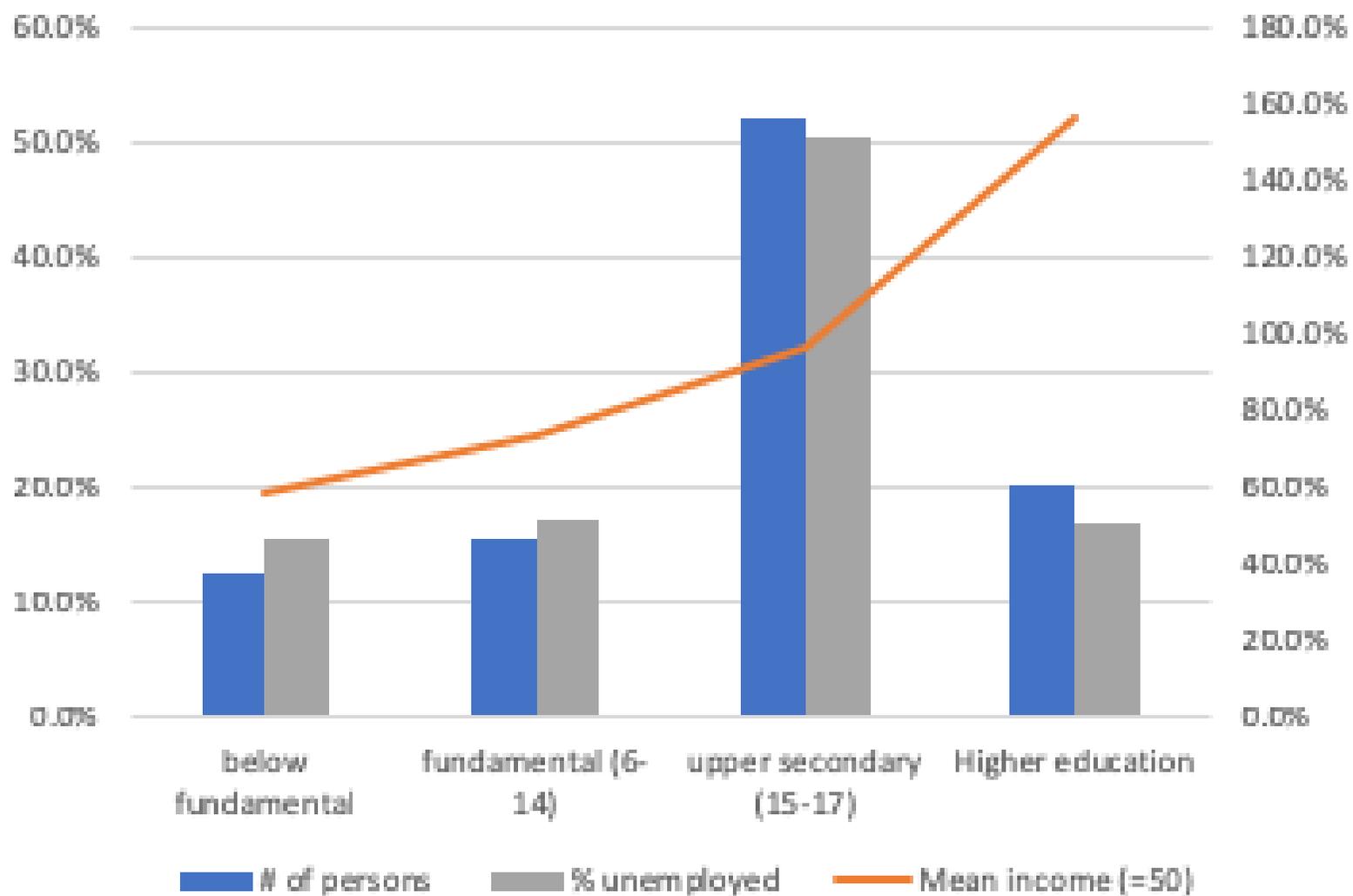
Presentation to the 7th German-Brazilian Dialogue
on Science, Research and Innovation

São Paulo, 2018

Education and the labor market in Brazil – convergence or divergence?

- There is an ongoing project of changing upper secondary education in Brazil, moving from an unified, mandatory curriculum to a more differentiated system, with different academic and vocational tracks.
- The rationale for this reform is that, currently, secondary education is geared for preparing the students for higher education, but, in practice, only a fraction of the students get to higher education, about half of them never get their degrees, and, of those who graduate, a large number works in secondary – level activities.
- The question is whether this reform will make secondary education more relevant to the student's professional outlook

Employment and Income by levels of study (pop 25-26)



Occupations of persons with higher education, 25-26 age group	
Managers, directors	3.5%
Liberal professions and intellectual work	10.8%
Service, vendors, administrative work	35.2%
Technicians and middle-level professionals	8.6%
Elementary occupations	15.5%
others	26.4%
Source: PNAD continua 2017	

The main points of the reform

- To allow the students going to higher education to chose their fields of study at the upper secondary education
 - Today, 50% of the enrolment is in education and the social sciences
- To give more room to vocational education, by reducing the weight of mandatory courses
 - Today, 16% of the enrolment is in vocational education, concentrated in health and administrative services
- To provide students arriving at secondary school with low level basic education a more practical, less academic curricula
 - Brazil is at the bottom of PISA for 15 years olds, with most students below the expected minimum
- To move from discipline-based to competence-based education
 - It is not a question of changing the curriculum, and there is little experience in Brazil for doing this

The main challenges, to be addressed:

- The 2017 employment data reflects Brazil's current economic depression, but:
 - In an economic recovery, will the employment levels return to the previous levels?
 - With the transformation of the job market brought about by the digital economy, will there still be places for low-quality, labor intensive employment?
 - Vocational education is important and has to be expanded, and there will be always demand for high quality, vocational education, what will be the space in the job market for low-level professional education in the forthcoming, digital economy?

Some provisional conclusions

- The high cost and failure rates of higher education may work as an incentive for vocational education to grow.
- On the medium and long range, the main difficulty for the integration of the young generation in the forthcoming job market is the quality of basic, initial education, particularly in language and math. The main limiting factor is the quality of the teaching profession
- Another limitation for vocational education in Brazil is that the country lacks as well-functioning apprentice system, with involvement of the business sector.
- New teaching technologies, distance education, etc., are important to provide further education for adults, but do not seem to be relevant for the improvement of the quality and economic relevance of the country's education system.