



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The “Conhecimento Brasil” Program neglects the structural problems of Brazilian science and fails to offer a solution to the brain drain

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We, a group of Brazilian scientists residing abroad in diverse career stages, are writing in response to CNPq’s recent announcement of the “Talent Repatriation Program - Conhecimento Brasil,” (see Morimoto 2024). We discuss our impressions and suggestions to align the proposal with what the program aims to achieve.

We acknowledge the positive aspects of the call, such as compensation compatible with the position and the potential investment in host institutions. However, the program lacks explicit criteria and fails to address some of the main reasons for Brazilian researchers leaving the country: job deficits, instability in funding to maintain research programs, and limited prospects for professional growth. Retaining scientists will only be feasible through a profound reform in the scientific career that provides concrete professional growth opportunities and fosters high-level research. Strategies include, for example, regularization of the scientific profession, salaries and annual adjustments compatible with qualifications, and investment in the institution’s infrastructure. Without retention strategies, the proposed repatriation is merely contingent and might result in re-emigration at the end of the program.

Another critical point is how the program fits into the context of a scientist’s employability in Brazil. The limited number of positions and long in-person selection processes lacking coherence and transparency constitute significant obstacles in the scientific career. A “repatriated” scientist would only exacerbate the already enormous surplus of scientists in the job market after the scholarship period. Therefore, it is crucial that the program is integrated with the expansion of opportunities and other strategies to reduce the precariousness of the scientific career in Brazil, by increasing

the number of positions, improving career plans, and restructuring selection processes in higher education institutions and Brazilian research centers.

While the program is a potential advancement for Brazilian science, there is room for improvement. It is essential to conduct extensive consultations with the Brazilian academic community, both domestically and abroad, to optimize the criteria for professional selection and allocation of funds and personnel. Additionally, it is necessary to increase funding for international collaboration projects with Brazilian scientists abroad. The formation of a Brazilian scientific diaspora is an opportunity to expand collaboration networks, gather international funding, and value our role in the globalization of science (Dajani 2023). Previous federal government programs have been effective in initiating this diaspora, but are failing to maintain and expand international networks due to the lack of enduring support (Diele-Viegas et al. 2024, Sá 2016).

Finally, we acknowledge the willingness of the current government to advance Brazilian science (Soares et al. 2023), but there is an urgent need for structural changes that will not only attract scientists residing abroad back to Brazil but also benefit the entire Brazilian academic-scientific community. We recognize that recent investments are positive and much-needed; however, without structural changes, we will remain vulnerable to interests and circumstantial instabilities. Because of this, we urge the entire Brazilian academic community, regardless of their residential and professional address, to come together in assessing and supporting the steps for improvements in Brazilian science.

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