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On Renault's Ayrton Senna site in Curitiba, you often meet engineers who were trained and qualified at UTC. From Marketing to Factor management, these graduates today occupy interesting positions. The cultural experience gained in France, plus UTC training explain, partly this phenomenon.

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“Deciding to study abroad is already a token of an open mind”, says Alain Tissier by way of an introduction, Executive Vice Chairman of Renault Brazil. “When Brazilians come to France to study – recalling that Brazil is 17 times larger than France – they often take the opportunity to visit other parts of Europe. When they return to Brazil they do so with a high added value at that critical moment when they are recruited in the job market”. When Renault arrived in Curitiba – with a 250 hectare industrial site – it was concomitant with the first student exchange programmes. The fact that a French company was setting up shop in their State encouraged a lot of young people to apply to France, even if the attractive alternative, going to the USA was predominant. “At the time, Curitiba was ready to welcome foreign companies. Going to France appeared professionally interesting” recalls Milton Trein, who today is Head of Economic and Strategic Planning at Renault Brazil. In 1998, he was selected by the State University of Paraná to join the second group of Brazilian students who went to UTC – “It was also the year of the World Football Cup” he adds with a beaming smile.

Understanding cultural differences, a major added value

In 1998, it was rather rare for young people to study abroad. Brazil as a country was becoming economically stable, but nonetheless it was difficult to leave. Milton Trein described his year at UTC as very important in order to understand French culture. “For example, in a meeting, the French can get hot under the collar and argue openly with colleagues but this in no way changes their interpersonal relationships, whereas a Brazilian in the same context would play low profile and seek a consensus at any price. This may appear anecdotal but the rules of the game are fundamental if we want to avoid being submitted to hierarchic decision and accepting “soft belly” consensus.” Alain Tissier adds with a smile, that Brazilians still considered” the typical Frenchman as someone who shouts and never washes! If you have the same skills,

understanding the other man's culture is a definite added value. For this reason, those who went to study at UTC and did some placements in the area, now occupy managerial posts with us in Brazil." While in Compiègne, Milton Trein chose to follow management and economic specialty courses, on top of his basic engineering training in mechanical engineering, before doing a 6 month placement with Faurecia. "This vision of UTC – far more enterprise oriented than what we had in Paraná at the Federal University, contributed a lot to my professional way of life. Learning to speak French also enabled me to follow the discussion when the language in meetings switched to French!"

Renault in Brazil

Brazil was Renault's first industrial installation outside France, indeed outside the EU. In Curitiba, the site assembles private cars and light commercial vans (Logan, Sandero, Duster, Megane II, Master III, with an output capacity of 380 000 vehicles/yr.), as well as engines. Sales have never stopped growing, after a phase of adaptation to the country's market-place – Renault is the 5th make present in Brazil – a very competitive market. "Renault's activity since it installed itself here has doubled, thanks to emergence of a new middle class of Brazilian. Brazil is the second country in the world for Renault, in terms of sales, after France. And Brazil contributes to the global growth of the Renault Group, with Russia, India, etc. In Curitiba, the French touch was practically inexistent before Renault arrived on the scene; we now employ 6 500 staff, not including the 25 000 indirect jobs (sub-contracts ...) says Alain Tissier. Today the French 'expats' have been replaced by Brazilian and South American management. Some of the latter in fact were recruited in France, where their open, positive-thinking and hard-working profile was very much appreciated.