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EFA 2005 – BRAZIL REPORT

Introduction

Brazil is a federative republic located in South America. Its 8.5 million square kilometers are divided into 27 federative units and a little under 6,000 municipalities. The legislation establishes the right to basic education. Primary education attendance is mandatory. The population even has judicial mechanisms that ensure their right to enroll at a school that is relatively close to their place of residence. Educational responsibilities are divided among the following three government levels: 1) local governments – mainly in charge of ECCE (early childhood care and education) and primary education; 2) states – responsible for primary and secondary education; 3) the federal government – this level has an important participation in technical, vocational and higher education. The ten-year plan for EFA is the National Education Plan, passed in 2001. Quality is one of the main concerns of both the Plan and legislation in general, and the following areas are emphasized: 1) the improvement of educational inputs; 2) higher education for all teachers; 3) decentralized management.

Considering this complex framework of relationships among three government levels, the identification of the areas comprehended by this report – establishing quality as an axis for the observation of progress made in the promotion of EFA – recognizes that “quality definitions and assessments vary around the world”, as do the strategies used to change or improve the results of learning provided by national education systems. Indeed, recent history has shown different combinations of public policies and socio-economic mobilization for the creation and execution of plans and programs with this objective. At times, they include innovations in ways to educate and in pedagogies. Sometimes they involve the adoption of new management systems, including several types of social participation and social controls for their results. Also, they give those programs greater or lesser broadness, complexity or longevity.

Following this perception, the Brazilian case study will be based on a “contextualized” idea of quality – both in relation to the increase in access and the number of years of schooling and in relation to educational resources/inputs and to the results of learning - which can be pointed out based on the information available at this time in the country. In terms of the movements that have been observed to stem from these performance elements in the Brazilian educational system^[1], it will not necessarily be causal or determining factors that will be sought but hypotheses for explanation based on evidence of parallelism between some of the results observed and the promised/expected impact of different types of public policy both of a substantive nature (curricular changes, changes in teacher training, changes in the quality and in the

^[1] The Brazilian educational system has an impressive scope. It is important to consider this when we examine its expansion and the efforts to improve it. At all levels, it serves almost 60 million people (55 million in basic schools and 4 million in higher education) and mobilizes more than 1,8 million teachers. Basic education is offered by a network of over 300 thousand schools. The Federal Government manages universities, colleges and technological schools; state governments are responsible for half of the primary schools and for almost all secondary schools, and municipalities are in charge of the remaining primary schools and of most kindergartens.

provision of educational inputs) and of an adjective nature (governance and management methods, instruments for social control, etc). The option to highlight these bases should sustain another hypothesis: that some recombination involving these policies could be relevant strategies to confer strength, durability and sustainability to governmental and social efforts for the achievement of levels of quality in education which are consistent with those accepted as common scopes of the Education for All movement all over the world.

1.A contextualized idea of quality

Since the mid-eighties, the idea of quality in education as something related to the supposed demands for quality on the part of citizens and/or human capital in society and in the knowledge economy has been spread worldwide with increasing frequency. This means that the quality of education is based on the capacity of educational systems to make it possible for people to develop cognitive and social competences. These competences should be developed to levels that are compatible with those demanded by production organization methods and patterns of sociability and political participation in countries where globalization processes are taking place.

It is important to point out the concept of quality of education at the Jomtien Conference: “basic learning needs comprise both essential learning tools and the basic learning content required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning.” (Declaration, Article 1, paragraph 1).

Of course, in this light, the quality of education may seem unattainable or – even worse – achievable for few. There is the risk that the false but widespread idea that there is a necessary trade-off involving quality and equity in the management of school systems will be confirmed.

Nevertheless, it has also been demonstrated that scientific progress – in studies on human intelligence, neurology and psychology, among other fields – makes it possible for us to expect great progress in pedagogical concepts, in the outline of educational institutions and in the organization and management of educational systems. This is true not only in terms of a better comprehension of how individual and collective learning is processed but also in relation to greater possibilities for the use of information and communication technologies in educational processes and in the institutional formation of partner networks – or social partnerships – that might broaden the reach of educational institutions.

It is possible to pragmatically imagine educational quality that can be translated into the possibility for basic education to promote (a) access for a greater percentage of the population to good quality schools; (b) more consistent and reiterating processes for the acquisition of knowledge and cognitive skills; and (c) the use of this dexterity in acquisition for the systematic inclusion of knowledge necessary for the individual to have control, with a reasonable level of autonomy, over ever-changing life situations presented to people by the world as challenges.

2.Coverage and efficiency of the basic school system

Brazil greatly improved coverage levels in the 90s. In 1990, 81% of the children in the country were in school. Nowadays, this percentage reaches 96%. The number of high school registrations has doubled. (Annex I – tables 1, 2 and 3).

When we examine the movement of the several indicators over time, we can observe a significant difference from generation to generation: youths of the same age would, a few decades ago, be out of school, part of the large groups of illiterate individuals. They would have had their schooling interrupted before the end of the fourth grade. It is relevant to mention the rhythm with which the educational system has expanded because the fact that a country with Brazil's geographic and demographic dimensions must face great difficulties in the establishment of a mass-education system has to be taken into account.

An important effect is beginning to be noticed in regards to the most elementary of all indicators: illiteracy. Rates have dropped from 39.6% in 1960 to 20.1% in 1991 and 13.6% in 2000. Over the last decade, in addition to the significant decrease in the total number of illiterate individuals, there has been a concentration of illiterate people among the elderly due to the increase in longevity. In the year 2000, illiteracy rates among the 20 – 24 age group went down to 6.7%, a figure very close to the residual rates found in some developed countries. In the other end are the rates for the 50+ age group: 29.4%. (Annex II – Tables 1 and 2). This and other educational indicators are subject to significant variations in rural and urban areas and in the most and least developed regions of the country. There have been fewer improvements in northeast, perhaps due to the fact that the levels of achievement in schools are lower in this region. Also, dropout rates are higher and the cultural conditions of rural areas and low-income settlements are poorer. However, disregarding regional differences, within younger groups illiteracy rates among women are constantly lower than they are among men. The decrease in the percentage of illiterate individuals is also greater for women than for men. Illiteracy rates among elderly women, however, are as high as they are among elderly men.

Another effect of the increase in coverage, in this case related to the decrease in dropout rates – or the increase in the number of registration rates – is the increase of the average number of years of schooling among people over 10 years of age. According to the National Household Surveys from 1992 and 2002, this average went from 5.5 to 6.7 years of schooling. Average schooling in rural areas increased even more than it did in cities: it increased 7% even though the index in these areas is still 6% lower than in urban zones.

This indicator gives us an ex-post view. The increase in the efficiency of the system, however, can be seen from a different perspective: determining which proportion of all possible years of schooling students are actually attending. One part shows how many years of schooling each age group attending school this year has accumulated. For instance, the 10 – 11 age group has accumulated, on average, 3.55 years of schooling. They should, however, have accumulated at least 4.5. This means that they have only been in school 78% of the time they should have been. The fact that women have been

able to accumulate a greater proportion of schooling (81.3%) than men have (76.7%) in the same group has been observed^{2[2]}.

3. Performance: what national exams (the SAEB and the ENEM) and the PISA show

In the late 80s, the first academic performance assessments were carried out by the Ministry of Education in sample Brazilian schools. The basis for the criticism of schools began to change slowly. The question of what it truly meant to have four, eight or eleven years of schooling in terms of knowledge and personal skills began to take shape. What students in different family and social situations would learn over their years in school also began being questioned.

The first attempts to measure school achievement were conducted by Fundação Carlos Chagas (São Paulo) through an agreement with the Ministry of Education. An experiment that involved developing test-construction capabilities was carried out in a few capital cities; later, a larger operation took place.

After 1992, the Ministry of Education, through the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research – INEP, established the Evaluation System for Basic Education – SAEB. Evaluation is based on samples from the educational system. Cognitive performance tests are administered (for Portuguese and Math) for students in the 4th and in the 8th grade in all states of the country. Technically, a response theory is used which makes it possible for tested students to be ranked according to proficiency scales that identify performance segments for areas and grades at five-levels: 1 - extremely critical; 2 - critical; 3 - intermediate; 4 - adequate and 5 - advanced^{3[3]}, ^{4[4]}

SAEB results demonstrate that although small variations are verified in academic performance assessments in the years during which these tests were administered – from 1995 to 2003 in a comparable manner and from 1990 to 1993 according to standards that were different from current ones – they are not sufficient to serve as evidence of any actual decline or progress in the average performance of the system. In fact, this is what has been noticed in most countries where this assessment takes place. This includes the United States, where, despite significant differences within the country, for decades there have not been variations in relation to what and how much North-American students learn (Carnoy).

In 2003, the results obtained in Portuguese and Math by 8th-grade students were still dissatisfactory, as shown in the table below:

^{2[2]} The comparison of these indicators involving States and Municipalities also shows a map of inequalities between age and gender groups in each section of the system.

^{3[3]} See details on this methodology in Annex 2.

^{4[4]} *Level 1 means that students can read isolated sentences only. At Level 2 students have difficulty reading simple texts, whereas further levels indicate different pacing of reading fluency.*

1. PERFORMANCE LEVEL

	(Percentages)	
Extremely Critical	4.86	6.65
Critical	20.08	51.71
Intermediate	64.76	38.85
Adequate	10.23	2.65
Advanced	0.06	0.14

The reports also point out regional differences in performance levels in each region in relation to the following subjects:

REGION	Portuguese			Math		
	Extremely Critical (percentages)	Intermediate	Advanced	Extremely Critical (percentages)	Intermediate	Advanced
North	4.06	67.98	0.05	7.3	32.48	0.02
Northeast	7.30	60.61	0.05	10.53	26.01	0.07
Southeast	4.58	64.02	0.07	6.76	42.08	0.21
South	2.47	71.39	0.06	2.81	51.48	0.09
Central	2.96	69.48	0.07	4.66	40.56	0.13
West						

In addition to these regional differences, it has been verified that, of the students whose level is “adequate” in Portuguese, 44% go to private schools, which account for less than 11% of the total number of students. In relation to Math, the difference is also extremely significant: 75% of the students whose level is “adequate” go to private schools.

The National High School Examination (*Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio – ENEM*) is taken by students graduating from high school. Unlike the SAEB, whose purpose is to measure performance based on school samples, the ENEM (a *student-based* test) focuses directly on the student that voluntarily registers to participate in the testing process. Each secondary student decides whether or not to participate in the exams. In 2003, the test was given to 1,3 million students in 605 municipalities. As ENEM examinees very often are interested in using their test results for higher education admission, this group is biased as it includes a greater number of privileged students who have plans to pursue further studies.

ENEM questions are structured in a contextualized and interdisciplinary manner based on five areas of competency students should have developed over the course of

basic education: (1) grasp of language, (2) comprehension of phenomena, (3) dealing with problem situations, (4) argumentation and (5) elaboration of proposals for intervention in reality. Although this exam has a transversal curricular approach, its foci, in fact, are Portuguese Language and Mathematics.^{5[5]}

In 2003, on a scale of zero to one hundred, students got an average grade of 49.55 on the objective test, which consisted of 63 multiple-choice questions, and 55.36 on the essay. In regards to the former, participants had more difficulty with the fourth area of competence, which consisted of relating information in order to elaborate consistent argumentation – the average grade was 46.8. In relation to the essay, the section in which students had the poorest performance was the fifth area of competence, which requires the use of knowledge acquired at school for the elaboration of proposals for intervention in reality.

Results also show that there is a significant educational gap between a public school student whose family income is below or equal to a minimum salary and a private school student whose family income is over 30 minimum salaries. While the former got an average grade of 37.52 on the ENEM, the average grade of the latter reached 70.41, a difference of 33 points on the objective test.

ENEM results also show inequality between students with the same socio-economic conditions attending schools in different education systems and students attending schools that are part of the same educational network whose socio-economic profiles differ. Among those that took the Exam, those who stated that their family income was from two to five minimum salaries, for example, had an average grade of 47.12 (public school students) and 58.89 (private school students). Among public school students, those whose mothers never went to school had an average grade of 38.58 while those whose mothers finished college had an average grade of 54.79.

In relation to the PISA, the performance of Brazilian youths aged 15 was also low compared to that of youths in other countries. It is possible to conclude, therefore, that the Brazilian educational system is not capable of providing the same basic educational quality other countries provide their youths with. Examining the Brazilian youths that reach learning levels considered to be the average in countries known for the quality of their educational system, it is observed that for a few *privileged groups* – group size being proportional – the quality of the education provided is similar to that of better-ranking systems. On the other hand, other *underprivileged groups* of the Brazilian system are not offered the same. For instance, consider Reading Assessments based on the highest socio-economic and cultural levels of each country. While 69% of Spanish youths and 74% of Korean youths rank at levels 3 and 4 (and around 24% of North-American youths reach level 5), only 16% and 5% of higher-income Brazilians reach these levels. It can be inferred that the low-income population is quite far from these rates of proficiency in reading and, also, in other areas of knowledge acquisition.

Although this is a regretful situation, it is not definitive and it is not being ignored by the educational agendas of the federal government and state governments, as will be shown below.

^{5[5]} The competencies assessed by the National High School Examination – ENEM consider the relationships between subjects and competencies that are part of the National Curricular Guidelines for High School Education.

4. Development of public policies and Programs

When analyzing the evolution of education on Brazil over the last decade, one should recall and evaluate the institutional and legal policies and initiatives that have been put into practice in recent years in order to change the quality and efficiency standards of the Brazilian educational system. These initiatives are developed at a federal level and also at state and municipal levels, and their effect will be observed over the next few years. In addition, the importance or impact of a few policies established in the mid-eighties should not be looked down on.

At the federal level, it is important to mention the Ministry's initiative in 1993/1994 to promote a comprehensive national discussion on the changes the Brazilian educational system should go through so it could face the challenges posed by the restarting of development and by the new patterns for the inclusion of the country in international policies and markets. With this purpose, the Ministry prepared a comprehensive agenda containing themes and suggestions for strategies – based in the concepts and recommendations of the Jomtien Conference – to be added to the proposal for a master plan: the Ten-Year Plan for Education for All.

In regards to this agenda, in all of the states and in thousands of municipalities both people acting in the area of education (teachers, administrators, researchers, etc.) and businesspeople, unions and administrators of other economic sectors gathered to debate and discuss governmental decisions. This clearly resulted in encouragement and in the recognition of innovative initiatives of a more pragmatic nature which federal and state administrations – and several municipalities – began to develop by mid-decade. A few themes that hadn't been dealt with properly in the recent past were the basis for these initiatives. They were the quality of education, equality of opportunities and the elimination of socio-educational exclusion.

It can be stated that in the 90s the quest for quality in basic education was based on the improvement of inputs, on the restructuring of funding and on the decentralization of management. Considering the innovations evaluated, the following should be pointed out: a) FUNDEF - the Primary Education Fund, b) the *Fundescola* project and its School Development Plans, c) Proformação, a program to train unlicensed teachers; the National Schoolbook Program, School Libraries and School Meal; e) *Bolsa-Escola* (the School Stipend Program); f) programs for the reduction of repetition rates through cycles; g) accelerated learning programs.

It is interesting to point out that although the federal initiatives described here were not completely articulated, they were linked by common goals: 1) to improve inputs and quality; 2) to focus particularly on the least developed regions; 3) to cover indirect and opportunity costs of schooling so that the least privileged children had access and success at school. Thus, a certain type of reasoning is observed within the set of programs.

At the same time, however, each program tends to have its own areas of influence and to operate separately from other programs. They differ in terms of their capacity to influence policies in states and municipalities. A similar situation occurs at State and Municipal Secretariats. Especially in states that are more developed or have better management capabilities, programs tend to be more cohesive and integrated. The complex federative structure of Brazil could not prevent the occasional overlapping of federal, state, and municipal actions.

It is also important to point out that in Brazil, traditionally, the set of programs varies as there are changes in governments and in the groups of professionals that have greater influence on management. This results in the discontinuity of actions, even when they are successful and

effective. During this period, in addition to a greater degree of permanence in relation to Ministry of Education staff, there were several cases of states where this tradition was broken.

Looking back at the last decade, it is observed that there was an improvement in technical capacity and in management policies for federal and state systems. This is true for many municipalities and medium-sized cities. There was also an increase in the availability of better-quality human and pedagogical resources.

a. FUNDEF – the Primary Education Fund

This Fund was established in 1996 and its implementation began in 1997. It consisted of a tax reform for education, passed as a constitutional amendment. The situation to be overcome included the lack of priority treatment to primary education despite the use of tax resources for education in general and the great differences in the use of funds for education depending on the state or municipality (in 1987 the average annual cost per student in public schools varied from US\$ 194.1 to 67.3). Depending on political bargaining power, municipalities got more or less investment from the state, while some states gave municipalities more responsibilities although they are the level of government with the least amount of fiscal income. The equalization fund consists of the pre-defined use of 15% of the tax income of States and municipalities. This amount is divided according to the number of students in each State and municipality and deposited into a bank account which is usually controlled by the secretary of education rather than other authorities, as used to be the case. The fund previews the use of complementary federal funds in regions where the average expenditure per student does not reach the minimum amount. This minimum average expenditure is legally defined as the ratio between the total estimated revenue and the total estimated enrollment in primary education for a given year. Regulations introduced criteria to reduce the estimated value, but last year the federal government revised it.

The evaluation of immediate impact was very positive. There was a substantial increase, especially for the poorest local governments (table 1). Net enrolment rates increased progressively until it reached 98% according to the 2000 Census (Brazil, 1999; Gomes, 2002; World Bank, 2003). The improvement of these rates was even greater in states that received complementary funds from the federal government (the experimental group - table 2) in relation to other states (the control group). In subsequent years, however, the minimum average expenditure per student was underestimated by the Federal government due to fiscal austerity, and therefore had less impact on disparities between states.

The teaching profession has benefited, especially in poorer areas, where resources have increased. The salaries of full-time teachers were significantly raised (table 4) and were maintained, in general, over the following years. This is due to the fact that at least 60% of the resources are reserved for the payment of salaries of working teachers and to cover costs with teacher training. This caused an increase in their level of schooling, as shown.

Specific and more recent evaluations carried out by the FUNDEF through case studies reveal, however, the insignificance of people's participation in the control of resources and the fact that power is concentrated in the hands of the executive branch of the government. The increase in people's participation due to the decentralization of

primary education, now a responsibility of municipalities, has not been confirmed (Oliveira, 2003). In regards to quality, these studies revealed that the average number of students per class has been stable (an indicator which can be questioned) and that the teachers' level of schooling has not gone up according to expectations (differently from the national average). Salaries have gone down although there has been an increase in the average expenditure per student^{6[6]} (Verhine and Rosa, 2003).

Table 1

Financial impact of the fund on municipalities with the lowest average expenditure per student

IN US\$

AVERAGE ANNUAL EXPENDITURE PER STUDENT (1)	BEFORE THE FUND (1997) %	AFTER THE FUND (1998) %	PERCENTAGE VARIATION (4)
	(2)	(3)	
Up to 86	67.07	279.95	+317.4
>86<=129	107.06	289.04	+170.0
>129<=172	153.75	376.61	+144.9
>172<=215	194.54	335.44	+72.4
>215<=271	242.43	349.60	+44.2
TOTAL	141.06	323.36	+129.2

Source: Brazil (1999).

Observation: The total number of municipalities with lower average annual expenditure was 3,347 (or 39.2 percent of the country's total). Column 2 indicates the range of education expenditure per student before FUNDEF. Column3 presents the average expenditure after it. The last column shows the increase from one year to the next.

Table 2
Primary education enrolment rates

AREA	GROSS RATIOS (A)		NET RATIOS (B)	
	1996	1998	1996	1998
Brazil	115.8	128.1	90.5	95.3
Exp. Group	117.1	147.1	83.6	90.1
Control group	122.1	134.9	94.1	96.2

Source: Ministry of Education.

^{6[6]} This research Project focused on a very limited number of municipalities. Though no explanation was presented in the report, it is possible to speculate that social security expenditure may be included and/or that the resources were misused.

Table 3
Positive variation in the average salary of full time teachers by level of education in
public schools
June 2000/December 1997

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	PERCENTAGE	
	BRAZIL	NORTHEAST- ERN REGION
Incomplete primary education	+49.0	+71.1
Primary education	+60.5	+94.5
Teaching school (secondary education)	+22.8	+53.5
Four-year college & teacher training	+27.2	+36.3
TOTAL	+29.6	+59.6

Source: sample surveys, FIPE (1998, 2000).

Note: Graduation from teaching school at the high school level is the minimum required for teaching grades 1 to 4, while a four-year college graduation is the minimum requirement for teaching grades 5 through 8. As of the year 2007, all the teachers will have to be college graduates. Results show that on average teachers' salaries in the country increased 29.6%. The most favored categories were those that include less qualified teachers, who received salaries significantly below the legally established minimum salary, especially in rural areas. Salary increases in the Northeast, the poorest region in the country, were higher than the national average. This once again shows that the Fund effectively promoted a progressive distribution of resources.

b.FUNDESCOLA – School Improvement Project

Another relevant change took place in the manner in which external funding resources are used. FUNDESCOLA is a good example of this. This is a program with a total of US\$ 1.3 billion from the Federal Government and from credit operations involving the World Bank. Its objective is to improve the quality of primary education, especially in terms of the reduction of repetition rates and the encouragement to the permanence of children in public schools until they complete their primary education.

The project encompasses 19 states in the North, Northeast and in the Central-West and about 400 municipalities in priority areas. It emphasizes the development of initiatives for strengthening school management and the teaching-learning process. The use of strategic planning at schools through School Development Plans (PDE) is one of the crucial components of the project and its external evaluation demonstrated that although there have not been statistically significant gains in the performance of students attending the schools served, there is evidence that there has been a decrease in dropout and repetition rates. Absenteeism levels, which were high before, have considerably dropped and there has been a modest but significant effect on income earnings (Carnoy et al,2003).

Thus, as concluded by Carnoy et al (2003), although there have not been notable advances in performance in regards to Portuguese and Mathematics, “results that show significant increase in the number of students passing grades in schools that have School

Development Plans may be more important for the future economic success of students in these schools than higher grades on academic performance tests.” This means that by becoming capable to progress from one grade to another and complete primary education (and possibly go on to high school), these students will definitely benefit more, within the context of these regions, than they would if their grades were higher than those of students attending schools that are not served by the program.

c. Teacher certification – PROFORMAÇÃO

Proformação is another program whose primary focus is to “contribute to the improvement of the educational performance of students in the first grades of primary education in the public school system,” also in less developed regions. Its purpose is to provide basic distance training at the high school level to unlicensed teachers who work with the first grades of elementary education and literacy classes.

The Program consists of a distance education system which combines self-study, school-based practice, local biweekly meetings among tutors and trainees, and a support communication system which includes assistance for tutors and trainees in each state through Training Agencies (TA) and permanent channels of communication among participants.

One of *Proformação*'s noticeable characteristics is its management and control strategy. The program is developed through a partnership involving the Ministry of Education, States and municipalities, and each of these levels has specific functions in its implementation.

The program is supervised and monitored by a central team and must undergo an external evaluation, whose results are encouraging. It has been verified that the program is far from expensive and inefficient considering the fact that that training a teacher for two years costs on average US\$1,100.⁷⁽⁷⁾ A little over one third of its funding consists of federal resources, and the rest is shared by participating States and Municipalities.

Of the 27.392 teachers that started the course in 2000, 86% passed, 3% failed and 11,5% dropped out. The first figure is significantly high in relation to usual distance education standards. The external evaluation also shows that teaching practices improved after the course. Teachers started planning classes, adopted new teaching and management practices and even began taking a more appropriate stance in terms of their relationship to students. Having greater expectations in relation to students' learning capacity and performance levels – which is vital for educational success – became more common among teachers who graduated the course. And most importantly: the evaluation concluded that this is followed, in many cases, by a significant improvement in the self-esteem of graduates.

⁷⁽⁷⁾ *There are no comparative studies on the costs of alternative teacher training strategies. What we can say, based on different analyses and evaluations, is that these strategies or kinds of teacher training are different in nature. What does this mean? A great part of the training of teachers at the university level is provided by very poor courses in private universities or higher education institutions. These courses are offered at a low cost for both institutions and students. They are normally cheaper for universities than they are for students, however. If we imagine that a student pays around US\$ 4,500 to graduate from a low-quality course, almost any distance learning program would be advantageous if it cost anywhere between US\$ 1,500 and US\$ 3,000. In these cases, especially in Brazilian rural areas, there are various benefits that can result from this, including teacher motivation, an increase in self-esteem, etc.*

There are indications that the continuity of this program may have a positive impact on the learning of children taught by these *teachers*. *The Ministry of Education continues to promote this course, expanding it now to other Brazilian regions and states.*

d.National Schoolbook Program, School Libraries and School Meals

The increase in of the schooling rates in Brazil was aided by additions to several existing programs and by the creation of new ones. The National Schoolbook Program was the one whose scope was broadened the most. There was even an evaluation process involving the books to be bought by the Ministry of Education and distributed to primary schools. The Ministry of Education began establishing rules that are more consistent with the public interest in acquisition processes. Four important universities are in charge of implementing evaluation criteria and selection and indication procedures. The criteria are: (1) books may not be incorrect in relation to concepts and may not contain information that is no longer current; (2) they may not contain incorrect information or be methodologically inconsistent; and (3) they may not be prejudiced or discriminatory in any form and may not contain religious teachings. These will be complemented with other specific selection criteria for each area of knowledge.

Due to this, over the last few years an intense renovation of the collection of schoolbooks available to schools – which, at one end of the spectrum, are the institutions making the choices and determining what will be purchased. Between 1998 and 2001, for instance, the number of new titles submitted for evaluation tripled; in a period of time a bit longer than that, from 1997 to 2004, 770 titles were listed as recommended purchases considering 1st through 4th grade only; Nine hundred and seventy-two titles were excluded from purchase lists. Finally, the evaluation experience gathered made it possible to create new tools for teachers, the Schoolbook Guide, which provides teachers with information and summaries of the collections approved.

The number of students served went from 5.5 million students and 56,9 million books in 1995 to 31.9 million students 80.3 million books in 2001. In 2001, the program covered 90.5% of the enrolled population. Resources more than quadrupled in terms of nominal figures. Fiscal austerity has not affected the program so far. It counts on great political support from mayors and state-level officials and politicians. In big cities, it serves poor pupils in neighborhoods in the outskirts and functions as a complementary tool for social policies. The same is true for rural areas, where it is managed by local politicians in a client-oriented way.

At the same time, the Ministry is developing another important activity: the National School Library Program. With an amount of US\$20 million in resources, almost 8 million collections have been distributed to almost all primary schools and also to youth and adult education institutions over the past few years. The number of schools served went from 20 thousand in 1998 to 139 thousand in 2001.

The National School Meal Program should also be considered as it reached a great level of decentralization of resources. It went from serving 33.2 million in 1995 to serving 37.1 million in 2001. Likewise, federal resources that were previously distributed according to political criteria were decentralized and began being transferred directly to schools so they could be used to cover costs (except for expenses with staff and small

investments) with the participation of the community. During its first year, 1995, the program served 28.3 million students in 114 thousand schools. Six years later, it served 30.6 million students and 123 thousand schools (Brazil, 2002). Coverage in 2001 was equal to about 87% of the student body and 69% of the institutions. State and municipal school transportation programs were also expanded with the support of the federal government, which made it easier for students to get to school. This effort for the universalization of primary education was favored by the great level of engagement of prosecutors and judges for the observance of the constitutional right to education. With this purpose, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice provided them with a national training program.

The decentralization of resources to schools and school meals were evaluated in a very positive manner according to a survey involving agents and users and according to case studies (7.5% believed that the program did not attend to priorities) The difficulties found were the loss of funding from other sources once the program Money Straight to School had been implemented and the low level of participation of the community in management, which was more frequently than not left to principals. In relation to the decentralization of school meals, opinions were also very positive. Schools quickly took over the management. However, the program was still irregular, especially in small schools. The role played by PTAs was very significant but modest in quantitative terms (Brazil, 1998).

e. *Bolsa Escola* -

Going to school may be an economic onus on poor families in which child labor is a source of income. Due to this, income transference programs linked to schooling were created. *Bolsa-Escola*, in the nation's capital, was based on the transference of resources to poorer families with school attendance as a condition. The evaluation indicates that, after four years, it served 25,680 families and 50,673 children, and the total cost of the program was equal to 1% of the total annual budget. School attendance increased and repetition and dropout rates, as well as age-grade discrepancies, significantly decreased. Cash transfers to mothers empowered women and increased family responsibility (Abramovay et al., 1998; Aguiar and Araújo, 2002). In 2001, the Federal Government launched the National Bolsa-Escola Program, whose objective was to reach 5.9 million families and 10.7 million children aged 6 to 15. Other countries, Mexico for instance, adopted identical programs. An evaluation carried out by the World Bank pointed out these results, as well as a fiscal affordability, and highlighted the fact that the *Bolsa Escola* has contributed to break down mechanisms traditionally used by schools to exclude poorer students. However, it pointed out that, even though there is strong evidence regarding increased enrollment and school attendance rates as well as reduced repetition and dropout rates, evidence of improved learning outcomes was much weaker (World Bank, 2001b).

While the Bolsa Escola was predominantly developed in metropolitan areas, the Program for the Eradication of Child Labor – PETI, considered a unique experience in the world, focused primarily outside of these areas, especially in rural zones. The evaluation on the five years during which the program has been developed, carried out by the World Bank, (World Bank, 2001a) is very positive. The total percentage of children working went

down from 20% in 1992 to 15% in 1999. In three States of the poorest region, child labor went down by 15%, 5%, and 10% respectively. This decrease has been linked to an after-school program^{8[8]} of great importance, which consists of extra hours at school for tutoring. Vulnerable students may be in school full time.

The relationship between educational and social authorities, however, needs improvement. Cash transfers to mothers, at the time in the amount of R\$ 40 per month and R\$ 10 per child for the after-school program, also increased their independence and family responsibility.

f.School Cycles

The high repetition rates in primary education have deserved significant responses on the part of state and municipal governments. This began in the early 80s. The most important of these responses is the creation of cycles that comprise the first and the second grade, throughout which students must be supervised and cannot fail. These programs were generally developed involving in-service teacher education, the provision of school supplies and an increase in the number of hours spent at school. The General Education Act (1996), which was part of the educational reform, made it the school's decision whether or not to work with continued progression, so these programs were extended all through the 8th grade and there are experiences involving high-school education. In 1999, 23% of primary education students were registered in cycle programs and 16% were in hybrid promotion systems. An evaluation sponsored by UNESCO-Brazil (Gomes, 2003) revealed that these programs face implementation problems due to the lack of resources, of coordination between the several levels and the necessary measures, and due to resistance to changes in the school's old social pact in relation to grade repetition. Specific naturalistic research shows that certain experiences are closer to an unconditional automatic promotion to the next grade, which has negative effects on achievement, on the social order at school and on the satisfaction of teachers. However, a research using data from the national evaluation system verified that there are not significant differences in student achievement between schools where cycles are used and schools where they are not used.

g.Accelerated learning programs:

These programs target students with age-grade discrepancies who need to make up for lost time. They are given access to special teaching-learning conditions and their self-esteem improves. The total enrolment in acceleration classes was 1,072,648 or 3.1% of the total primary education enrolment. *Acelera Brasil* is the main and probably the most comprehensive of these programs, demanding that there be a maximum number of students in class, abundant educational materials, in-service teacher education and supervision, in addition to political commitment on the part of related authorities. Learning conditions are simple and essential and in sink with what good education manuals establish. The summary of the external evaluations (Gomes, 2003) indicates that considerable progress has been made by students and that resources have been saved,

^{8[8]} *The program consists of extra hours at school for tutoring. Vulnerable students may be in school full time.*

which makes up for the costs with the programs. In general, student achievement is at the same level for classmates, and self-esteem, according to the research project, is lower among students that did not take part in the program, although differences were not significant. With respect to the activity of teachers in the program, the research group did not find resistance to the external evaluation. Difficulties were found, however, in terms of the reinsertion of students in regular education since the same treatment was not observed.

Childhood Education (ECCE)

Literature does not present us with sufficient evidence regarding the quality of early childhood care and education (ECCE) and adult education. The new funding structure has prioritized primary education in a manner that, at least at certain times, the availability of public resources declined and was partly covered by de community funding. The delegation of responsibility over primary education and ECCE to counties put the brakes on the medium-term expansion of the latter because the former is the priority (Castro and Barreto, 2001). It has, however, increased access to both types of education. Significant social movements have opposed the alternative low-cost, low-quality model for ECCE. Facilities are probably worse than those used for primary education, and teachers are less qualified and make less money (Rosemberg, 2003). However, the average expenditure per child is higher than that for primary school (Gomes, 2003). Still, the actual division for the 20% poorest is 24% for childcare centers, 42% for pre-schools and 28% for primary education (World Bank, 2001).

Conclusion

In a light that considers only improvements in student achievement, Brazilian policies in the 90s were proven necessary but insufficient. The restructuring of funding and management towards decentralization, the improvement of inputs and the coverage of indirect and opportunity costs related to schooling had concrete results in terms of improving access and equity and reducing repetition, dropout rates and age-grade distortions. In fact, these last three indicators could be better defined as measurements of efficiency rather than measurements of quality. Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that the improvement in the population's education has taken place through the increase in the average number of years of schooling. The synergy between the innovations implemented, particularly those put into practice under the co-ordination of the Ministry of Education, seems to have had good results. This confirms the evidence shown by international literature regarding the relationship between these variables and the improvement of results.

However, further advances in quality seem to depend not only on the maintenance of the achievements already reached but also on a new generation of innovations more deeply rooted in the classroom "black box". Developing pedagogical models, teaching

materials and deeper changes in basic and advanced teacher training are prospective priority areas.

BRAZIL: EDUCATION
Net Enrollment Rates for the 7 to 14 and 15 to 19 Age Groups
by Gender and Region 1992 - 2002

Regions and Age Groups	1992			2002		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
BRAZIL						
7 to 14	81,3	80,0	82,8	93,8	93,4	94,2
15 to 19	19,6	16,6	22,7	39,3	35,5	43,3
North						
7 to 14	48,5	47,7	49,3	92,2	91,5	92,8
15 to 19	14,3	12,2	16,2	33,8	29,7	37,7
Northeast						
7 to 14	39,4	37,9	41,0	91,6	90,6	92,5
15 to 19	10,1	7,9	12,1	25,6	20,7	30,6
Southeast						
7 to 14	48,8	48,9	48,7	95,2	95,0	95,4
15 to 19	19,0	15,8	22,3	48,2	45,3	51,2
South						
7 to 14	48,4	48,3	48,6	95,8	96,5	95,2
15 to 19	17,8	16,8	18,8	47,2	43,5	51,1
Central West						
7 to 14	47,3	47,1	47,6	93,8	93,1	94,5
15 to 19	14,4	12,9	15,9	41,0	36,3	45,6

SOURCE: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics/National Household Survey

BRAZIL : EDUCATION

Illiteracy rates in the population over 15 years old, by location and age group

GROUPS OF AGE	BRAZIL 1992-2002					
	TOTAL		URBAN		RURAL	
	1992	2002	1992	2002	1992	2002
over 15	17,2	11,8	12,4	9,1	35,9	27,7
15 to 19	8,2	2,8	4,7	1,9	20,0	7,3
15 to 17	8,2	2,6	4,5	1,8	19,9	6,4
18 to 19	8,3	3,2	5,0	2,2	20,1	9,0
20 to 24	9,1	4,6	5,7	3,0	22,7	13,9
25 to 29	10,0	6,3	6,7	4,3	24,0	19,0
30 to 39	12,0	8,4	8,0	6,0	30,2	23,4
40 to 49	19,5	11,5	14,2	8,5	42,1	30,7
50 to 59	28,1	19,6	21,4	15,2	52,3	43,6
over 60	42,4	32,7	34,9	27,7	67,0	57,2
Age ignored	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	20,7

Source: IBGE/PNAD

BRAZIL:POPULATION

Illiteracy Rates among people with 15 years old and more
by Regions 2002

Age Groups	BRAZIL	North (*)	Northeast	Southeast	South	Midde West
(percent of the age group)						
over 15	11,8	9,8	23,4	7,2	6,7	9,6
15 to 19	2,8	2,2	6,4	1,1	0,9	1,3
15 to 17	2,6	2,1	5,5	1,1	0,8	1,5
18 to 19	3,2	2,4	7,7	1,2	0,9	1,0
20 to 24	4,6	3,2	10,8	1,9	1,4	2,3
25 to 29	6,3	4,9	15,1	2,7	2,3	3,6

30 to 39	8,4	6,9	19,9	4,1	3,2	5,9
40 to 49	11,5	11,6	26,8	6,1	6,0	10,8
50 to 59	19,6	19,5	39,7	11,8	12,0	18,4
60 years up	32,7	37,9	54,2	23,0	21,9	35,9
Ignored age	19,7	38,8	22,5	24,9	0,0	0,0

Source: IBGE/PNAD

Note: (*) exclusive rural areas
