OVERVIEW OF THE BRAZILIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM
FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC OF BRAZIL
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Brazil is a Federal Republic occupying an area of 8.5 million km², half the land mass of South America. **More than 200 million inhabitants** are distributed very unequally throughout the national territory, most of them along the coast. The Brazilian population is very heterogeneous thanks to successive waves of immigration throughout the centuries which has resulted in a mixed population of native inhabitants, Europeans, Africans and Asians, amongst others. Even so, the country enjoys a remarkable linguistic unity. With the exception of the approximately 360,000 indigenous people belonging to 219 ethnic groups that speak more than 180 languages, **Portuguese is the Brazilian mother tongue**.

This linguistic homogeneity is overlaid by a **striking cultural variety and profound economic inequality** among the country’s various regions, a situation that has had a marked effect on the Brazilian education system. In 2010, Brasilia, the capital city of Brazil, had the highest human development index (HDI) in the country (0.824) while the state of Maranhão had the lowest HDI (0.612). By means of comparison, the Brazilian average is 0.699.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>200 million inhabitants</th>
<th>48% white</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.6% living in rural areas</td>
<td>44% brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42% younger than 24 years old</td>
<td>7% black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.5% yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.2% indigenous</td>
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**The normative benchmarks of formal education in Brazil**

There are three main normative references for formal education in Brazil: the 1988 National Constitution, the 1996 National Law of Education and the National Plan of Education, decreed by the National Congress and approved under Law 13005 of June, 2014.

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**Ministry of Education (MEC)**
- Holds overall responsibility for the organization of education in Brazil and direct responsibility for funding Federal Universities and Schools.

**National Council for Education (CNE)**
- Establishes norms and core curriculum for all levels of education

**Public Sector**
- Federal Schools
- Federal Universities

**Private Sector**
- Higher Education Institutions – subject to recognition/approval

**State Department of Education**
- Establishes detailed norms for education in the state often through an optional State Council for Education, especially Secondary Education.

**Municipal Department of Education**
- Works closely with the State Department, responsible for Elementary Education (compulsory education – 6-14 years old/ 1st-9th year)

**ISCED 0**
- State Universities
- ISCED 2 and 3
- Schools must be licensed by State Secretariat

**ISCED 1**
- ISCED 0
- ISCED 2

**ISCED 2**
- ISCED 1
- ISCED 2
According to the current educational legislation, it is the responsibility of the Federal Union to co-ordinate the national educational policies linked to the different levels and systems, to provide technical and financial assistance to the states, the Federal District of Brasilia and the municipalities for the development of their educational systems. That is, to perform a normative (basis and set of guidelines), redistributive and supplementary functions beyond the resource allocation function aiming at reducing regional and social inequalities. Within this scenario, the federal government is primarily responsible for the provision of higher and professional education in the form of federal schools, including universities, institutions of higher education, technical schools and technological education centers. It also supervises the private higher education network. It is the responsibility of individual state governments to also provide elementary education and, as a priority, upper secondary education.

According to the Brazilian Federal Constitution, the Union must invest annually at least 18% of its net revenue from taxes towards the maintenance and development of education, while the states, Federal District of Brasilia and municipalities at least 25% of their net revenue from taxes, including those resulting from transfers by the Federal government. In addition to public funds, a 2.5% payroll tax contributes to public education financing. The public resources allocated to education, in 2013, were equivalent to 6% of the national GDP. The proportions of educational finance are: federal 20%, state 41% and municipal 39%.

The organization of the Brazilian education system

In terms of organization, the Brazilian education system is structured on two levels: basic education and higher education. Basic education consists of three stages: 1) early childhood education, which includes provision for children from 0 to 3 years of age (nursery schools) and from 4 to 5 (pre-school); 2) elementary education from 6 to 14 years of age and 3) upper secondary education, the final stage of basic education, with a minimum of three years’ attendance, from 15 to 17 years of age. The education is compulsory from pre-school to upper secondary (4 to 17 years old) and free in public schools.
ISCED 2011 Mapping of the Brazilian Basic Levels of Education

Source: EducationGPS
Monitoring and Evaluating Brazilian Education

The Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anisio Teixeira – INEP (Anisio Teixeira National Institute for Educational Research and Studies) is responsible for collecting data and evaluating the Brazilian educational systems at national level. The main activities of INEP are:

(i) development of indicators to measure the capacity of educational services, their efficiency, quality and expenditure;
(ii) dissemination of the data to the general public, media and policy-makers; and
(iii) development and implementation of an integrated education information system.

Education Census

Once a year, INEP carries out two censuses: The School Census on Basic Education and the Higher Education Census. They collect data for planning and implementing educational policies at every level of government.

School Census on Basic Education

The School Census on Basic Education is carried out annually at federal level. It collects information about all modalities of basic education: early childhood education, elementary education, secondary education, professional education and education for the young and adults.

Since 2007, teacher and student related data has been collected individually. Through the teacher’s questionnaire, it’s possible to identify the adequacy of their level of training and teaching activities, individualized teaching data, amongst other information. The student’s questionnaire provides information from the school population; identify personal data, location, the need for specialized educational services and/or different locations of the school, and
other support services for school development such as provision of school meals and transportation.

The goals of this Census are to provide information to analyze, diagnose and plan the Brazilian educational system and guide the definition of policies in order to promote the improvement of quality in education.

It is also used to subsidize federal government programme such as the School Textbook Distribution Programme (PNLD), the National School Transport Programme, the National School Meals Programme (PNAE) etc.

Higher Education Census

INEP also carries out the Higher Education Census which is the official statistic data base of higher education in the country. It collects information on undergraduate courses in public and private institutions of higher education on an annual basis. As in the Basic Education Census, the unit of data collection is the individual (student or teacher) which can be grouped by courses or institution. Besides individual data provided by teachers and students, the Census also collects information on the courses, personnel (administrative), financing and infrastructure of the higher education institutes (library, equipment, and other institutional resources).

Big numbers of 2015 School Census on Basic Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>186 thousands</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>2 millions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>49 millions</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: Censo Escolar INEP/Deed
National Assessments and Evaluations

The Brazilian experience of educational evaluation, taking into account the fact that it is a large continental country and its federal structure, is characterized by the implementation of a set of action and indicators involving the various participants, schools and educational systems in the country. INEP is the agency responsible for major educational assessments at the national level within the structure of Brazilian government:

National Assessment System for Basic Education (SAEB); National Secondary Education Examination (ENEM); National System for Evaluation of Higher Education (SINAES); National Examination for Certification of Adult Competencies (ENCCEJA)

The National Assessment System for Basic Education (local acronym SAEB – Sistema Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Básica) is the national system for evaluation of the basic education (ISCED 1, 2 and 3) in Brazil based on a rigorous sample methodology. It has been carried out on a bi-annual basis since 1993 and assesses the quality of teaching in Brazilian schools by measuring the achievements and performance of students at different stages in their studies and monitors changes in these achievements overtime, considering the existing conditions of the Brazilian education system.
The National Literacy Assessment (local acronym ANA – Avaliação Nacional da Alfabetização) is the first component of SAEB. The assessment is carried out every two years of all students enrolled in the third year of the primary level in public schools, covering basic literacy and numeracy.

SAEB has also been regularly conducting assessments of samples of national students from both public and private schools in the last year of primary (ISCED 1), lower secondary (ISCED 2) and upper secondary (ISCED 3) levels. Scientific procedures are used to ensure reliable national and state level sampling.

Prova Brasil is a national assessment programme based on student achievement tests implemented as a component of SAEB. The tests are the same from SAEB, however the Prova Brasil is given to all public school students attending the last year of primary (ISCED 1) and lower secondary (ISCED 2) levels, every two years since 2005.

Both programs are the reference for evaluation of basic education quality at a national level. The results provide the data source for the construction of Basic Education Development Index (IDEB), the main indicator of quality of basic education in Brazil. The index comprises of the students’ performances in Mathematics and Reading and also the approval rates of schools. The index uses the school as the lowest level of aggregation, which allows analysis for higher levels such as municipalities, states, regions and the country as a whole. The index scale is from 0 to 10.

Municipal IDEB Averages for primary public schools – Brazil, 2005-2015
The IDEB is used by policy makers and researchers for planning, implementation and evaluation of educational policies. Every municipality has a target index to be achieved during each cycle of IDEB, besides a national target index for 2021.

The SINAES evaluation system involves all the institutions of higher education in an on-going process. It comprises of a global and integrated evaluation system for academic activities consisting of three different processes, namely:

(i) Evaluation of institutions of higher education;
(ii) Evaluation of undergraduate courses of study; and
(iii) The National Examination of Student Performance (ENADE).
As components of one and the same evaluation system, each of these processes is carried out in different situations and at different points in the process. They all make use of their own instruments but are coordinated among themselves. These processes look at specific dimensions and indicators, with the aim of identifying strengths and weaknesses in areas of study and institutions, as well as promoting enhanced quality and relevance and, as a result, fostering education and providing society with information related to higher education in Brazil.

Other aspects to be considered as part of the process of evaluating institutions include access to additional information from the Higher Education Census, CAPES (Brazilian Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education) reports and appraisals of graduate programmes, as well as documents for (renewing) accreditation of institutions of higher education and any other data CONAES (National Commission for Higher Education Assessment) may consider relevant.

Progress of the Brazilian Education System

Undeniably there has been progress in the Brazilian educational system. However, it still has serious problems, worsened by the strong social inequalities that persist in the country. The following charts present some evidences of these two facts:

**Iliteracy rate of 15+ population – Brazil – 1940-2010**

Source: IBGE – *Censo Demográfico* 1940-2010; elaborated by INEP/Deed
Out-of-school population from 4 to 17 years old – Brazil, 2014

Mean Years of Schooling of the 18 to 29 years old population by age, family income, region, location, color/race – Brazil, 2014

Source: IBGE – PNAD; elaborated by INEP/Deed
Primary schools by type of school – Brazil, 2015

- Municipal: 71.6%
- State: 10.5%
- Private: 17.8%
- Federal: 0.02%

Source: School Census, INEP/Deed

Basic education schools by location – Brazil, 2015

- Urban: 65.3%
- Rural: 34.7%

Source: School Census, INEP/Deed
Percentage of schools with internet access by municipality – Brazil, 2015

Primary and Secondary Enrolment by distinct school location type – Brazil, 2015

Source: School Census, INEP/Deed
Approval rates by level of education – Brazil, 2008-2014

Percentage of over-age students for grade by municipality – Brazil, 2015

Source: School Census, INEP/Deed
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