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PERSPECTIVES ON PRACTICE AND POLICY

Success in Increasing Access and Retention in Primary Education in BRAZIL

Divonzir Arthur Gusso

Acknowledgements

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Disclaimer

Purpose

The world is approaching the 2015 deadline for achieving universal primary education—a target identified by both UNESCO in the World Declaration for All (2000) and the United Nations in the Millennium Development Goals (2000). Educate a Child commissioned four scholars to look at the successes and challenges faced by their respective countries that are close to achieving the goal—Botswana, Brazil, Lebanon, Malaysia.

About the Author

Dr. Divonzir Arthur Gusso is an economist, researcher, and program evaluator who has been affiliated with Brazil's Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) for 40 years and currently serves as a senior researcher. For much of his career, he led the Department of Educational Research and Planning Coordination at IPEA. He has worked at the Ministry of Education as head of the National Institute for Educational Research.

Contents

List of Abbreviations

BB	Banco do Brasil
BNDE	National Bank for Social Economic Development (Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico)
EDURURAL	Northeast Brazil Rural Education Project–World Bank (Programa de Apoio a Educação Rural do Nordeste do Brasil)
ENEM	National Secondary Education Exit Exam (Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio)
FUNDEB	Fund for the Development of Basic Education and Appreciation of Education Professionals (Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica e de Valorização dos Profissionais da Educação)
FUNDEF	Fund for the Development of Basic Education and Appreciation of Teachers (Fundo de Desenvolvimento do Ensino Fundamental e de Valorização do Magistério)
FUNDESCOLA	Fund for School Strengthening and Development (Fundo de Fortalecimento da Escola)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IBGE	Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatísticas)
IPEA	Institute for Applied Economic Research (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada)
MDS	Ministry of Social Development
NER	Net Enrollment Rate
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
PNAD	National Household Survey–Brazil (Pesquisa Nacional por Amostragem de Domicílios)
PRODASEC	Programa de Acao Socio-Educativo Cultural Para Areas Urbana Perifericas
PRONASEC	Programa Nordeste de Acao Socio-Educativo Cultural Para Areas Rurales
SAEB	National System for Evaluation of Basic Education (Sistema de Avaliação da Educação Básica)
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UNESCO	United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Summary

Brazil, by far the largest, wealthiest, and most populous country in South America, has made significant progress toward achieving universal primary education, including gender parity, over the last 60 years. From 1950 to 1970, when primary and lower secondary schools were separate institutions, the net enrollment rate (NER) for 7- to 14-year-olds attending either institution moved up from 36.2 percent to 67.1 percent. Following reforms in 1971 that merged these institutions—extending compulsory education from four to eight grades—and launched a new wave of school expansion, the NER continued to rise, from 79.9 percent in 1980, to 86.4 percent in 1991, and to 98.6 percent in 2012.

One of the world's biggest democracies, Brazil has struggled to overcome a turbulent political past, promote development, and build an egalitarian and educated society. Since civilian rule was restored in 1985, intellectuals, political leaders, the growing urban population, and members of religious and civil society organizations have pressed for legislation, polices, and funding to expand and modernize the education system. As important, clientelism[1] motivated public authorities to expand school services in emergent neighborhoods, build new schools, and hire lots of potential voters as teachers and school officers. This remains a constraint on the effectiveness and efficiency of the school system.

Historically, schools were located mainly in urban centers—that is, state capitals and middle size hinterland cities—and access was concentrated in the more economically developed eastern and southern states. Despite an ambitious effort to build schools, hire and train teachers, and upgrade facilities, impediments associated with differences in rates of access and retention persist related to region, family socioeconomic status, race, and gender. To manage these challenges, Brazil developed student-based funding formulas to distribute funds fairly within states; used conditional cash transfers to lift poor families out of poverty through education; encouraged states and municipalities to take actions to improve education in individual schools, and established national and international assessment systems to measure progress.[2]

Improving education quality and outcomes also loom as challenges. Although some indicators of quality, such as student-teacher ratio,[3] improved between 1999 and 2011, student performance on the national learning assessment Sistema de Avaliação da Educação Básica (National System for Evaluation of Basic Education or SAEB) stayed below the minimum desired achievement levels in Portuguese and mathematics, respectively.

[1] Clientelism is the exchange of goods and services for political support, often involving an implicit or explicit quid-pro-quo (see Stokes, 2013). For further discussion of this concept, see footnote 28.

[2] In 2000, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso entered Brazil in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), an international assessment that measures the reading, mathematics, and science literacy of 15-year-old students of participating countries. Brazil's last-place ranking on the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) sponsored assessment prompted significant reforms. Student performance on the PISA is similar to that on the *Prova Brasil and the Sistema de Avaliação da Educação Básica* (National System for Evaluation of Basic Education or SAEB).

[3] Between 1999 and 2011, class size decreased from approximately 35 to approximately 25 students per class.

The last cycle of economic growth—and equally important—of political stability supplied sufficient resources to achieve near universal access and to increase retention and completion rates. Nevertheless, money is not enough to guarantee quality. Future efforts must address improving the competence and professionalism of teachers, ensuring the relevance of the curriculum, advancing methods of instruction to enhance learning and student engagement, and increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of school management, while also reducing social, ethnic and gender inequalities in access to quality and relevant education.

Introduction

Brazil was a latecomer to the cluster of countries with broad and open access education systems. The country worked hard and fast to incorporate the growing population of children and youth into the school system.

From 1960–2010, the government was able to develop the education system by taking advantage of several periods of vigorous economic growth, audacious willingness to invest, and a high tax rate. Despite traditional and less efficient administrative structures, Brazil began to expand school provision, trying to deal with the demand for education from a hundred new cities being created in the hinterland of south and southwest regions and a rapid influx of new migrants in its major cities.

Intense political mobilization of intellectuals, political leaders, and members of religious and civil society associations created pressure for democratic and modernizing legislation to overcome the country's socio-cultural and educational backwardness. At the same time, clientelism mobilized public authorities to expand school services in emerging neighborhoods, building new school facilities, and hiring potential voters as teachers and school officers.

In this context some sound efforts—supported by innovative public funding—led to increased enrollments. In 1971, a reform, extending compulsory education from four to eight grades, launched a new wave of schooling expansion. Despite the expected constraints of an authoritarian regime, this expansion of elementary education contributed to democratizing schooling access to the children of the growing urban population, whose families were searching for employment and improved living standards.

Even economic instabilities and the dramatic transition back to democracy during the 1980s did not limit the process. Indeed, innovative strategies undertaken during the 1990s enabled the school system to address the challenges of quality and equity, while near-universal access was achieved and inefficiency was reduced.

Country Context

Key Aspects of Political Context

According to the Federal Constitution of 1988, Brazil is a presidential federal republic, with executive power residing in the president, who serves as head of state and head of government. Legislative power is vested in two chambers of the National Congress–a Senate, composed of three representatives from each of the 26 states and from the Federal District, and a Chamber of Deputies, who are elected on the basis of (multi-party) proportional representation. The judicial system is composed of the Federal Supreme Court—primarily aimed at the Constitutional Jurisdiction—and Supreme Courts (Justice, Electoral, and Labor) complemented by federal regional courts.

Each federated unit (a state or the Federal District) is limited in political, administrative and fiscal authority. There is tripartite power: a governor, supported by secretaries (including one for education); legislative assemblies, composed of deputies who are elected by the state's voters; and by state justice courts.

After 15 years of an authoritarian regime of the New State (from 1930s to 1945) the country experienced another two decades (1945–1964) of full democratic liberties and regular shifts of government leaders. However, the competitive political dispute processes continued to be hindered by patronage and corporate practices, which were inherited from the 19th century political formation of the power of rural oligarchy and urban elites bound to the primary exporting economy. This political framework persisted even after a new political-institutional crisis of 1961–1964, resulting in the deposition of the elected president and the establishment of a bureaucratic-authoritarian regime (an alliance between the military and center-right politicians) which lasted until the mid-1980s.

Although initially achieving success in its economic development strategies, particularly in the late 1970s, the regime lost legitimacy, especially in the view of the urban middle and working classes. This was a result of dramatically increasing external debt, accelerating inflation, deepening recession, rising unemployment, and declining household incomes. This led to major demonstrations to restore democracy. And in 1985 congressional elections resulted in the victory by a "presidentialist coalition" of forces that opposed the previous regime and various factions from the former alliance in the military regime. This coalition continues hold political power to the present day.

As an essential part of that process, a new Constitution was created in 1988, re-establishing basic democratic institutions, broad social and human rights guarantees, and equitable educational goals. However, the governing coalition was not successful in its various attempts to strengthen Brazil's economy within the globalized context.

After the first president under the new Constitution, Fernando Collor de Mello, was impeached by Congress in 1992, Itamar Franco, who had been vice president, assumed the presidency. Franco initiated broad economic reforms that would pave the way for new and comprehensive structural changes in the economy through 2002.

Key Aspects of Economic Context

To understand the peculiarities of more recent Brazilian economic development, one needs to take into account the country's dynamics in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Brazil, throughout the monarchy until the beginning of the Republic (1898), was integrated into the international division of labor and production. It was a major exporter of raw materials—sugar, cotton, rubber, and coffee, and also an important importer of manufactured goods. Brazil's productive structure was based on a system of plantations, which depended on slave labor until its complete abolition in 1888. The society was characterized by profound social and economic inequalities.

In the early 20th century, while Brazil basically remained an exporter of raw materials, industrial development also occurred. This was accompanied by an increase in European immigrants, who settled in the larger cities of the south and southeast. Some of these immigrants formed an expanded middle class and, thus, created a burgeoning consumer market. These two dynamics—industrial development and urban consumer market expansion—accelerated significantly during and after World War II.

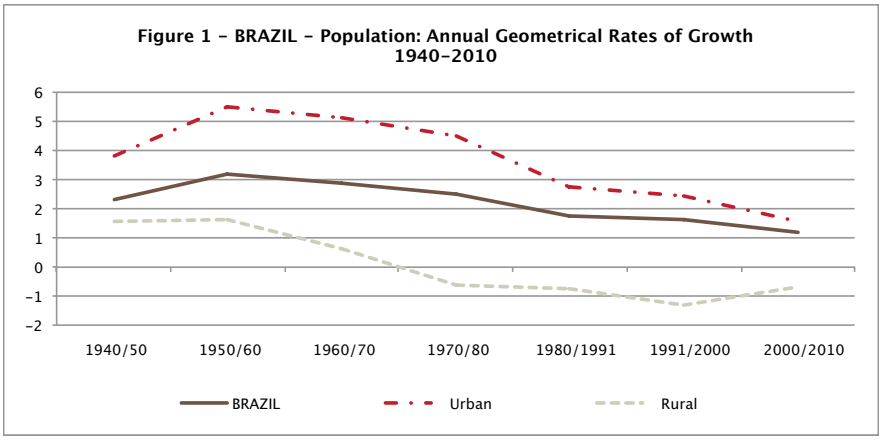
There was a long and consistent improvement in knowledge and political-institutional practices that endowed Brazil with a solid planning apparatus and social-economic coordination. In many international studies, Brazil is taken as an important case of a "developmental" state. This means that the federal government was active in creating and implementing economic policies—as well as those such as education, urban development, science and technology, and health—through plans and programs for the medium and long term (Skidmore, 1967; Baer, 2001; Evans, 2011).

In spite of the political-institutional crisis of 1961–1964, the Brazilian economy became catalyzed by manufacturing sectors, through an import substitution process that continued through the 1960s. Consumers had been increasingly supplied with domestically produced durable goods, and enterprises were equipped and supplied with national capital and intermediate goods (steel, energy, minerals, and so on).

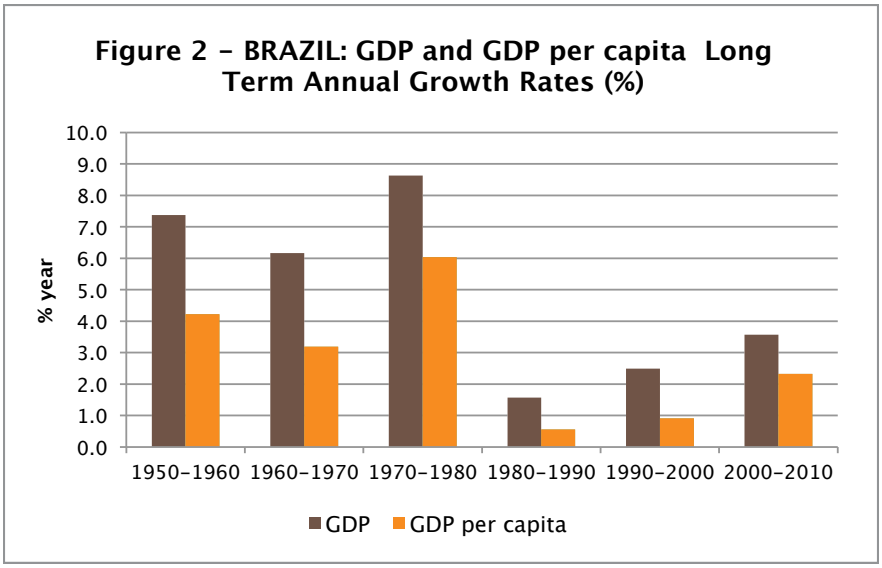
Beginning in the late 1960s, agriculture was also modernized, with coffee losing primacy to mechanized and technologically innovative production of soybeans, corn, cotton and meat. Brazil even managed to overcome the dramatic external shock caused by the global oil crisis in 1974–1975. Industrial development also included more complex sectors such as petrochemical and metallurgy and the consolidation of large logistics, energy, and telecommunications infrastructure.

Another important dimension of the Brazilian development process is its peculiar demographic trajectory. From 1940–1970 the country experienced a persistent population growth—almost 3 percent a year for three decades—starting from an already substantial base of 43 million inhabitants in 1940 (see Figure 1). It means that child birth rate was very high requiring a huge effort to feed, care for, and educate children. This trend changed in the late 1970s, when the birth rate declined precipitously. This "demographic transition" lasted two decades, after which the annual demographic growth rate stabilized near the 1.2 percent each year and a new cycle of population ageing began.

Figure 1: Brazil – Population: Annual Geometrical Rates of Growth 1940–2010



For three decades, sound economic and social changes transformed the country from a traditional agrarian exporter structure with most of its population living in rural areas, to a relatively modern industrial and urban one. During the 1960s and 1970s Brazil's gross domestic product (GDP) grew at an average rate of 6.4 percent per year, then making Brazil the fifth largest economy in the world by the early 1990s (see Figure 2). After a critical lapse in the 1980s, Brazil's economy experienced a slow recovery in the 1990s to achieve a new cycle with the international market expansion during the first decade of the 21st century.



This growth was also aided by a successful economic stabilization program, initiated with the

Real Plan (1994), which included changes the monetary system, deep fiscal adjustment, trade liberalization, and privatization of state companies. Between 2003 and 2009, the structural effects of these reforms allowed Brazil to put the economy again on solid footing. In turn, these actions led to further economic expansion, ensuring an average annual GDP growth rate around 4 percent.

The most important effect of economic recovery was that it enabled the federal government to implement policies to reduce poverty and social inequalities and to enlarge the internal market—in particular by adding 30 million new consumers to domestic markets. These policies involved the re-distribution of income and expansion of social protection systems, leading to significant reduction of poverty and inequality. For example, the percentage of the population classified as poor, who tended to reside in rural and less developed regions of the north and northeast, declined from 65.6 percent in 1970, to 34.7 percent in 1980, 28.6 percent in 1990, 21.0 percent in 2001, and 9.8 percent in 2011 (see Table 1).[4] In addition, the Gini index, which measures inequality in per capital income, increased from .54 in 1960 to .61 in 1990, and then declined, reaching .53 in 2011 (IPEA, 2012, p.7).[5] These structural changes also affected the dimensions of poverty and social exclusion by color/race and region, as the proportion of blacks among the poorest groups declined and the proportion among the wealthiest groups increased (Silva & Goes, 2013).

Table 1 - Poor population by residence areas, 1970-2011

YEARS	(units)	AREAS				Poors/Total Population (%)
		Metropolitan	Urban	Rural	TOTAL	
1970	(Thousands)	11,478	18,179	31,481	61,138	
	(%)	18.8	29.7	51.5	100.0	65.6
1980	(Thousands)	9,069	14,830	17,397	41,296	
	(%)	22.0	35.9	42.1	100.0	34.7
1990	(Thousands)	13,724	18,257	9,989	41,970	
	(%)	32.7	43.5	23.8	100.0	28.6
2001	(Thousands)	11,982	17,356	6,483	35,730	
	(%)	33.3	48.6	18.1	100.0	21.0
2011	(Thousands)	6,704	9,099	2,908	18,724	
	(%)	35.8	48.6	15.5	100.0	9.8

Source: IBGE, PNAD apud Rocha, 2013

[4] Please note that the use of commas and decimals in some instances in this document are the reverse of American usage; that is, the American 1,552.60 would could represented here as 1.552,60.

[5] A Gini coefficient of 1.0 represents perfect equality within the population.

Key Aspects of Education System History

In the early 1930s a group of educators, intellectuals, and scientists created the Brazilian Association of Education, which organized several national conferences on education, leading to the development of a manifesto: The Reconstruction of Education in Brazil: The People and the Government. This was aimed at putting the topic of education on the agenda of the National Constituent Assembly of 1934. Activists in this Association contributed to developing a chapter with 10 articles, which were inserted in the Federal Constitution of 1946. Until then, there had only been a disjointed set of legislation reflecting the weak and limited demand for education, restricted to certain segments of society, especially the urban middle and upper classes of that time.

The 1946 Constitution stipulated that a) primary school attendance would be compulsory[6] as well as that companies with more than one hundred employees would be required to b) provide their workers' children with primary schooling and c) provide vocational education for workers under the age of 18.[7] The Constitution also outlined the conditions for organizing secondary and higher education and specified that 10 percent of tax revenues should be devoted to funding education. However, the Constitution did not clarify the distribution of responsibilities for management and maintenance of primary and secondary schools among federal, state, and municipal governments.

In 1948, the Executive sent to Congress a Bill of Guidelines and Bases of National Education that delineated standards for the organization and functioning of all levels and types of education as well as spelled out the rules for the financing and management of the education system. However, this Bill was controversial and was not enacted.[8] Finally, in 1961, after several changes, Law No. 4024 of Guidelines and Bases of National Education was passed. Some provisions of this law, which have been adapted in later versions,[9] should be highlighted:

- *Primary education* was compulsory for four years (and possibly extending two more years) and would be taught in by teachers who were graduates of the normal branch of secondary school.
- Secondary school would be taught in two levels: *lower secondary* (where students were supposed to be at least 11 years old and have passed an entrance exam) and *higher secondary*, sub-divided into branches: *secondary* (with an academic character and able to provide access to higher education) and vocational (commercial, normal, industrial, and agricultural).[10]
- Basic standards were established for *vocational education*, which was mostly provided by specialized institutions maintained by industrial and commercial businesses.

[6] Although families could be penalized for failing to honor this obligation, such penalties could be avoided if they proved that schooling was unavailable or if the families' level of poverty precluded the children's attendance.

[7] These norms had little effect, since there were few companies with over one hundred employees. Only years later, did it become the basis of a large semi-public system of vocational education.

[8] One controversy surrounding the proposed expansion of free public lower secondary schooling was that this was seen as a threat to private confessional schools, which were run by Catholic religious orders (such as, Jesuits, Silesians, Marist, Franciscans) and served middle class families. Another controversy was the concern, especially of ultra-liberalist factions, that government funding of schools might give the state the power to define goals for values education.

[9] Generally speaking, the framework of this law (class of subjects, formats) was repeated in subsequent laws.

[10] All secondary programs followed a curriculum consisting of various common subjects as well as subjects specific to each branch. All secondary school teachers were supposed to have higher education degrees.

- *Higher education*—mostly government institutions at the time—composed of schools oriented toward professional careers—which could eventually become universities.
- Primary and secondary education would be predominantly the responsibility of the states and the Federal District, while higher education would be predominantly a responsibility of the federal government.[11]
- The education systems would be regulated by the Education Council composed of representatives of various social sectors.
- The percentages of tax revenues to be allocated for education from the national government (12 percent) and from the states, Federal District, and municipalities (20 percent) were specified.
- Three-tenths of federal government funds would be allocated to each of three national funds (for primary school, secondary, and higher education), which would operate according to an education plan (setting targets for institutions and establishing policy and administrative measures to achieve them).

The perceived deficiencies that stemmed from the rapid expansion of elementary education (such as, high proportion of unqualified teachers, excessive repetition and dropout, low rate of continuation in lower secondary school) led the government to undertake education reforms in the late 1960s that focus on "basic education" (pre-schools, elementary, and secondary education) as well as higher education, through the University Reform of 1968.[12] In the first case, the federal government created a commission to reform primary and secondary education, which informed the bill that the Congress passed in 1971 (Law No. 5692), providing some key changes that included:

- Primary and lower secondary schools were integrated, creating an elementary school of eight grades, intended to universalize the provision of compulsory education for 7-to 14-year-olds.
- Secondary education was unified and renamed high school, incorporating general (academic) and vocational or professional education.
- Kindergartens were regulated with greater closely.
- Alternative (that is, non-school) forms of education for youth and adults were enabled.

[11] One exception to this is in the State of São Paulo, which developed its own institutions of higher education and research in the 1930s and 1950s, with the University of São Paulo today being one of the most reputable in the country. A few other states have come to govern their higher education institutions as well.

[12] Among other issues, the University Reform of 1968 opened the way to expanding and improving teacher education, which until then was concentrated in a branch of secondary education (the "escolas normais," following the French model).

The federal government was assigned responsibility for determining mechanisms to finance education. This responsibility was strengthened by tax law changes at the end of the 1960s. Thus, federal agencies were in a stronger position to gain compliance of the state and municipal systems in relation to the 1st Sector Plan for Educational Development 1972–1974. This plan involved three main lines of action:[13]

1. *Operation-School*, which would support state and municipal systems to a) expand schooling provision to achieve 80 percent coverage of the 7- to 14-year-olds; b) complete the unification of elementary (primary and lower secondary) education at least in state capitals and in the Federal District; and c) increase retention in rural schools.
2. *Implementation of polytechnic schools* that, with assistance and funding from USAID, aimed initially at generating enrollments of 240,000 students via 276 *ginasios* (lower secondary schools) and eight *colégios* (schools offering upper secondary courses) in four states.[14]
3. *Training about 100,000 primary education teachers*, who complete the normal program in secondary school to replace more than a half of non-qualified teachers, and to prepare teacher trainers to support the increased number of training courses for new teachers (with an investment from federal and state governments of about US$17.5 million).[15]

Soon after developing this plan, Brazil was buffeted by a severe economic instability – due to the global oil crisis in 1973. This led to creating the 2nd National Development Plan, 1975–1979. The new plan involved reducing public expenditures, but educational expenditures were preserved to allow the implementation of the 2nd Education and Culture Sector Plan, 1975–1979. This plan emphasized reforms of higher education, but also focused on expanding access and reducing repetition and dropout in elementary schooling.

The Plan proposed re-structuring incentives to the states and in articulating the new guidelines. Despite the current support to the expansion of schools, demanding greater local efforts from state and municipalities in logistical matters, the Plan also opened new fronts:

- Development of innovative teaching methodologies
- Reformulation of curricula, development of education processes adjusted to the social-economic needs and peculiarities of the different rural regions of the country; and adoption of effective learning procedures for students with learning disabilities;
- Production and development of textbooks and material for the subject of *science and mathematics;* research teams at universities were awarded grants to design, test, and disseminate innovative books and teaching "kits" to help elementary school teachers to improve learning achievements

[13] The National Plans of Development included sectoral programming, expressed in education in this 2nd Education and Culture Sector Plan.

[14] The project was reformulated to complement the target plan of implementing elementary school in another four states, and it counted on investments of about US$57.8 million, including US$30.7 million in U.S. government loans. The former school models were replaced by integrated primary schools.

[15] Such projects were financed mainly by federal government (which made federal funds available and paid the loans) combined with state funds. These efforts would be complemented by other programs aimed at reducing costs of access to schools, through the distribution of books, teaching materials and school meals.

- Development of the standards of teacher performance, via training and qualification, development of the technical and administrative staff, development of the curricula planning and learning supervision team[16]
- Reinforcement of programs for student assistance, widespread coverage of school meals, increase of school books being given out to around 1.8 million units

Brazil's 3rd Education, Culture, and Sport Sector Plan, 1980–1985 highlighted the need to address social inequalities of educational opportunities. This involved changes in curriculum, teaching/learning strategies, and vocational education. These initiatives were directed to: a) the poor population living in the urban outskirts (resulting in a program called PRODASEC) and b) children living in rural zones (now the responsibility of PRONASEC). The plan also promoted decentralized policy discussions to incorporate regional insights into separate regional policy and program instruments (Brasil, 1980).

The implementation of this 3rd Plan suffered not only from several changes in leadership in the Ministry of Education, but also from the political transition from military to civilian leadership in 1985. However, the plan led to implementing two important programs affecting the last barriers to access: the Northeast Brazil Rural Education Project (EDURURAL, 1981–1987) focused on 218 municipalities in the northeastern states (see Harbison & Hanushek, 1992) and the Monhangara program (1984–1992), which focused on 25 municipalities in the north and mid-west regions. Both programs, supported by World Bank loans (Scaff, 2007), were aimed at municipalities with greater socioeconomic and educational needs. The programs provided financial assistance in a) building schools; b) training teachers, supervisors, and administrative support staff; c) developing curricula and distributing books and learning materials; d) providing school meals; e) supporting municipal education management agencies; and f) implementing monitoring and evaluation systems.

In 1988 Brazil adopted a new Constitution, in which education receives significant attention (in articles 205–214) as social right. The Constitution also specified detailed principles to guide new education legislation to correspond to the process of re-democratization. Discussions also ensued toward revising the Law of Guidelines and Norms of Education, but the debates reflected conflicting goals and values. Moreover, there was a period of political instability in the early 1990s. However, in the wake of Jomtiem World Congress on Education for All (see Inter-Agency Commission, 1990), in 1993–1994 the new federal government organized regional public discussions on education, followed by a national conference that identified guidelines and targets for a National Decennial Plan of Education for All.

[16] In several of these measures, the Ministry of Education began to stimulate partnerships between state education administrations and federal universities, which were multiplying and developing. It is around this time that master's and doctoral degree programs in education were initiated.

In 1996, after a concentrated effort by the federal government and with the support of several state governments, a new law was formulated that changed the basic education system only slightly as it was framed in the 1971 legislation.[17] The most striking change was in management: a) decentralizing to municipalities the responsibilities for educational and logistics management of elementary and early childhood education and b) redefining the roles of state governments to support and coordinate local policies in these areas and to expand and manage secondary school.

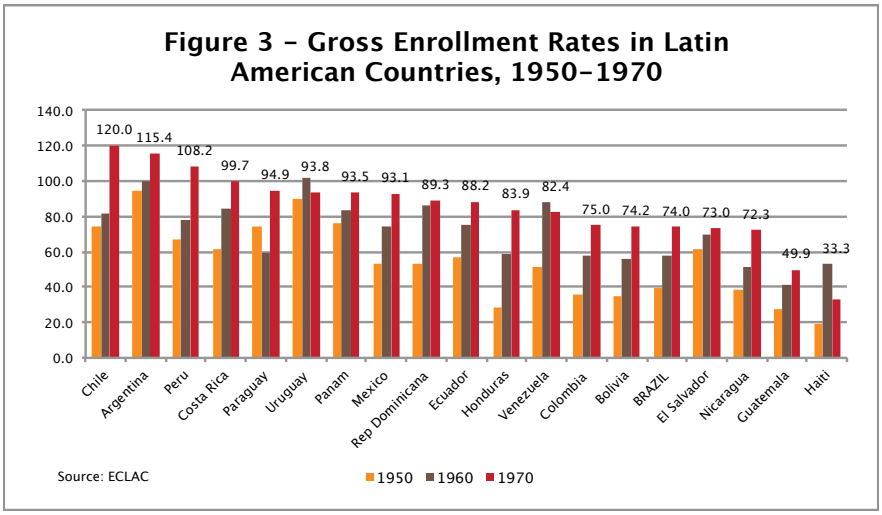
Even before the approval and adoption of this law, a Constitutional Amendment (1997) and supplementary regulations established the Fund for Development and Maintenance of Basic Education and Teaching Values (FUNDEF). These measures introduced a system of statistical information and budget control to enforce the Fund. They also stipulated that elementary education would receive the majority share (that is, two-thirds) of resources allocated to the sector (implying around 15 percent of net taxes from states and municipalities). In addition, these measures specified that the Federal Government should allocate its resources to federated units so as to equalize expenditure per student across states and the federal district.

[17] Another structural change was implemented beginning in 2006–2007 to extend basic education from 8 to 9 years; by 2013 this change has been almost completely implemented.

What Has Been Achieved?

Patterns of Primary School Access and Retention, 1950–2010

Brazil is a latecomer to the cluster of countries with broad and open access education systems. The country had, in these earlier years, one of the lower rates of school coverage in Latin America (see Figure 3).



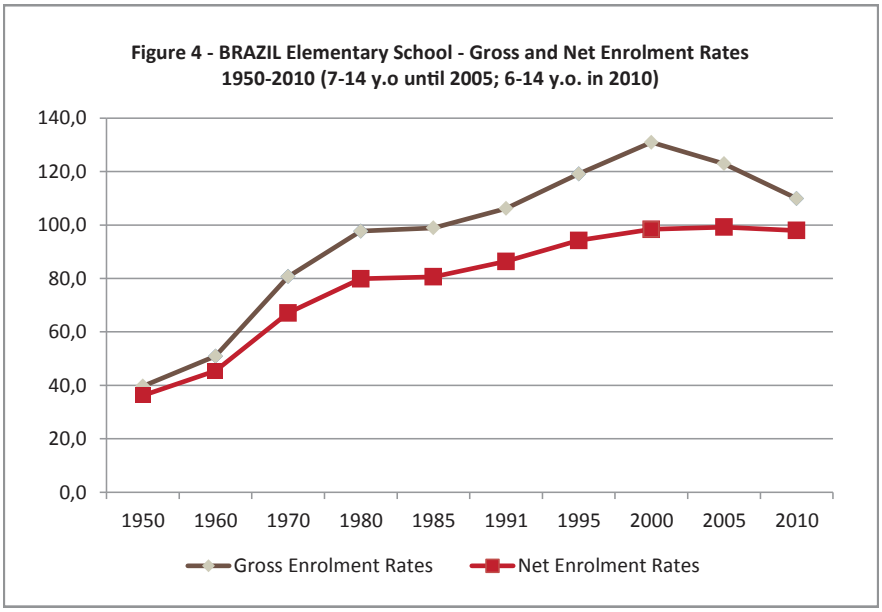
Its net enrollment rate (NER) for 7- to 14-year-olds in a nine-grade compulsory school system hit near universal levels in 2000. But, until the 1950s, most of the basic supply was limited to a few main urban centers—state capitals and middle-sized hinterland cities. Also, access was concentrated in the more economically developed regions, comprising the eastern and southern states of the country.

Primary education offered in four grades was targeted to reach school-age population of 7- to 14-year-olds, according to the terms of the National Plan of Education in 1961.[18] Lower secondary education was also offered to 11- to 14-year-olds, but pupils had to pass a selective examination to enter lower secondary school. Thus, even in 1960 the basic education NER was less than 50 percent of 7- to 14-year-olds, with less than 3 percent of the age group enrolled in lower secondary schools (see Figure 4). By 1970, however, the basic education NER had risen to 67.1 percent, with 14 percent of the age group enrolled in lower secondary schools.[19]

[18] The four grades had to be targeted to cover eight age groups because there were no schools in many areas. So, when a unit was opened, it would attract children who were 7 years old or older. Also, promotion rates were very low in the first and third grades, causing an accumulation of repeaters (that is, over-age students).

[19] Data from the same source indicate that basic school enrollment increased substantially between 1945 and 1955 and again between 1955 and 1960, but the latter increase is not reflected in the enrollment rates because of the high growth rate (more than 3 percent a year) in the age group of 7- to 14-year-olds.

As noted above, in 1971 the primary and lower secondary schools were merged, thus enlarging the compulsory education pattern to eight grades, though still targeting the 7- to 14-year-old population. In line with that reform, federal programs drove forward state and local efforts to expand school supply, which led to an increase in the NER. So, by 1980 the net enrollment rate had increased to 79.9 percent and remained above 80 percent even during the "lost decade" of the 1980s, when economy suffered critical instability and erratic growth. We also note that in 1995 the NER was 94.2 percent, further increasing to almost 100 percent (98.4 percent) by 2000, a level it basically retained in 2005 (99.2 percent) and 2010 (97.9 percent) (see Figure 4).[20]



Two main influencing factors must now be mentioned. First, beginning in mid-1970s, there was a significant reduction in birth and population growth rates in rural as well as urban areas, reducing the overall number of basic school-age children in the country. Second, in the context of a second wave of industrial growth and agricultural modernization, there was a more intense migration flow from northeast to southern regions and simultaneously an increase in migrations from rural to urban areas (where more schools existed). In combination, the birth rate decline and rural–urban migration contributed to a growing percentage of children at least entering basic education (Plank 1996; Sposito, 2002).

Though the progress in access was evident, efficiency—in terms of promotion and (non) repetition—was very low during the 1970s and early 1980s. Promotion rates in first grades remained very low during the decades of 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s; the main difficulties were a) to improve teaching performance in basic literacy and numeracy, and b) to break school practices of evaluation and progression. Another problem had been, during the 1960s, transition from primary to lower secondary; no more than one-third of pupils completing primary fourth grade entered the initial grade in "ginasios," although almost 80 percent of the entrants in this cycle had chance to complete lower secondary.

[20] In 2007, compulsory education was extended to include 6 year olds in the first grade of a nine-year cycle. This explains the slight decrease in the NER (from 99.2 percent to 97.9 percent) between 2005 and 2010.

After the 1971 reform was implemented, combining primary and lower secondary schools this second problem was surmounted. Although enrollments in first grade grew at 1.2 percent yearly, enrollments in fifth grade—formerly the initial grade of lower secondary—grew three times as fast (3.4 percent each year). This resulted in increased numbers of students completing elementary school. Nevertheless, since the progress in changing the promotion rates in the four initial grades was modest, the broad proportion of entrants who completed elementary school had increased more slowly until the end of 1980. These rates are around 20 percent of entrants to the first grade who reached the fifth grade without repeating; this reached near 30 percent at the end of this period. Thus, a large proportion of students left the system with less than eight years of schooling.

For years administrative statistics showed a high level of dropout in the first grades, despite evidence from the demographic data that show an incongruent level of schooling completion or an average schooling higher than three or four years. This contradiction began to be cleared in late 1980s and led to another diagnosis and policies.21 Instead of higher dropout rates, the system was accumulating large numbers of repeaters who progressed very slowly through eight grades of compulsory schooling and a lesser proportion of dropouts, especially in first grades (see Table 2)

Table 2 - BRAZIL - Elementary Schools Retention Indicators at 1st and 5th grades 1981 - 2005

Indicators	AREAS			
	Wrong Measure		Corrected Meassure	
Promotion rates				
	1st grade	**5th grade**	**1st grade**	**5th grade**
1981	67.4	71.1	58.6	71.1
1991	74.3	72.1	61.5	72.1
2001	82.1	85.8	72.6	85.8
2005	82.6	81.6	75.2	71.8
Repetition rates				
1981	29.6	22.7	58.0	32.6
1991	22.6	22.4	47.9	37.8
2001	16.3	12.9	31.9	24.6
2005	13.4	14.3	29.4	24.8
Dropout rates				
1981	25.5	13.9	2.0	12.4
1991	10.9	14.4	1.0	10.0
2001	10.2	12.3	1.0	6.7
2005	8.7	10.0	1.0	8.5

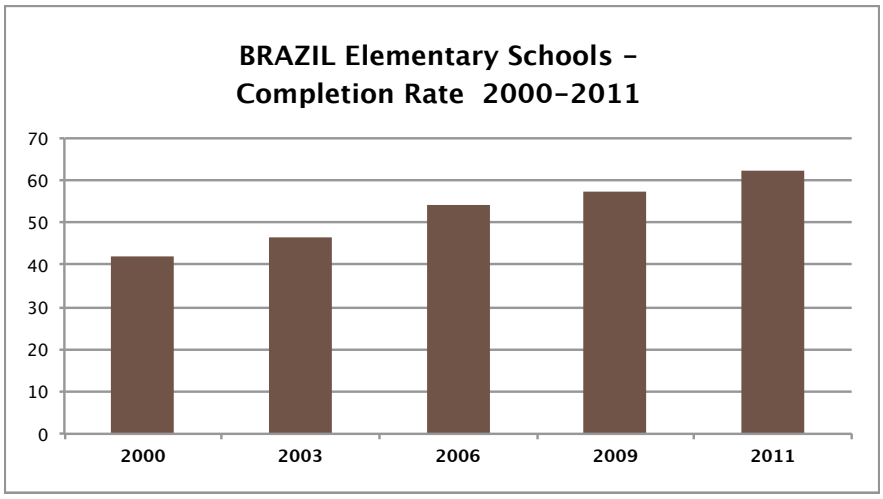
Source: IBGE and Ministry of Education, apud Klein&Fontanive, 2009
Note: "Wrong" direct reading of administrative records; "Correct" estimates with demographic data base from IBGE/PNAD

In the next period, under more autonomous decision-making arrangements, state and local education systems gradually adopted several measures for coping with retention and dropout. In a few instances they sought to improve teacher qualifications and teaching methods; in others

[21] Some researchers proposed a new methodology to measure school trajectories by means of microdata from National Household Surveys instead of data from administrative records of schools, obtaining more precise and accurate observations. It was verified that dropout was significantly lower than was believed; and pupils remained longer in schools, as repeaters (Klein, 2003, p. 109; Klein & Fontanive, 2009, pp.24–26).

they implemented a policy of automatic promotion. As a result, transition rates increased from an average around 30 percent to 40 percent in first four grades in 2000 to near 70 percent in 2011, with the transitions rates somewhat greater from fourth to eighth grades. The conventional measure of completion rate—proportion of promoted in the last grade in year t=9 of enrolled in grade 1 in year t=1—had increased in the last decade from 42 percent to 62 percent (see Figure 5). However, it was less than 30 percent in the 1970s and 1980s.[22]

Figure 5: Elementary School Completion Rates, 2000–2011



"Physical" exclusion, in terms of lack of intake or lack of school attainment, has been reduced again in recent years to near 2 percent of the school-age population, even when the compulsory grades and ages were expanded, from four to eight grades and from 7 to 14 to 6 to 14 years old.[23] This translates into fewer than 731,000 out-of-school children of the almost 30 million of compulsory school age. There remains another kind of exclusion, as almost 10 percent of each cohort drops out before completing eight grades, and 14 year-old students—approximately 22 percent of age group 15- to 19-year-olds—are still enrolled in basic grades instead of in upper

[22] Measures of completion rates in Brazilian elementary schools were always controversial because of the relatively low quality of data from administrative records provided by schools and the difficulties in coping with the dynamics of school flows.

[23] Discussions about the extension of elementary education to nine grades (including 6-year-olds) were started in 2005, and the policy was implemented in 2007 to be completed by the year of 2010.

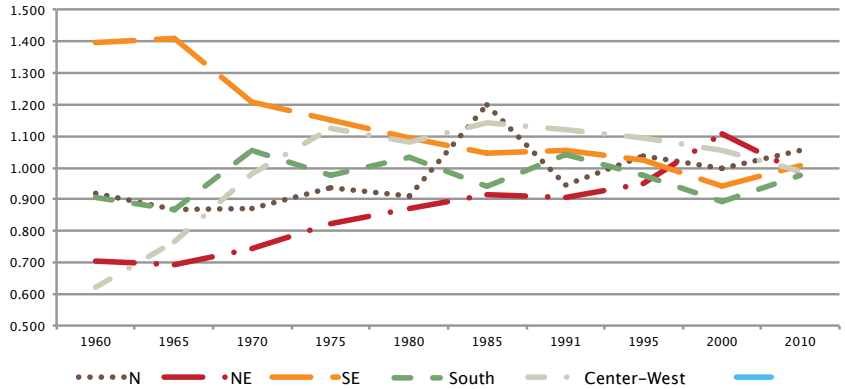
Equity of Access and Retention, 1960–2010

The overall pattern of access and retention in basic education presented above hides some important subpopulation differences. Here we discuss differences by region, family socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and gender.

Regional Differences

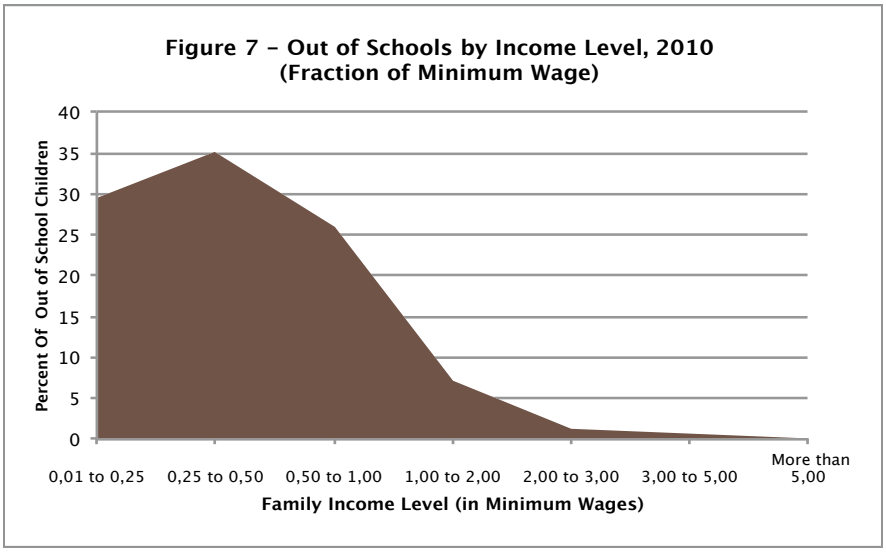
Figure 6 presents regional gross enrollment rates (GERs) relative to the national average GER. One observes that in the 1960s and early 1970s regional differences were quite large, but gradually decline, so that in 2010 regional differences are not very noticeable. For instance, in 1960 the relative GER's ranged from a high of 1.39 in the urbanized southeast to lows of 0.70 in the northeast and 0.62 in the center-west, which historically contained more rural areas. However, in 2010 the relative GERs ranged from highs of 1.05 in the north and 1.01 in the southeast to lows of 0.98 in the southeast and 0.99 in both the northeast and center-west. It is important to note that the low inter-regional differences in relative GER in 2010 was obtained despite their different levels of economic development and fiscal resources.

Figure 6 – BRAZIL: Elementary Schools – Convergence of GER Relative Value by Regions, 1960–2010 (Brazil = 1,000)



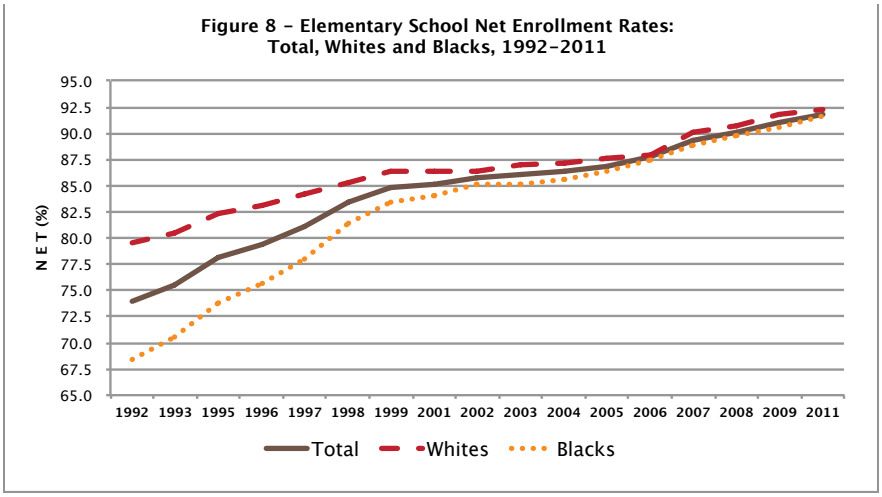
Family Socioeconomic Status Differences

Although the percentage of out-of-school children has been small since 1995, children who are not in school are disproportionately from the poorest families. As shown in Figure 7, the vast majority of out-of-school children (ages 7 to 14 years) are from households with a per capita income of less than the minimum wage, and only very small percentage of out-of-school children were from households with per capital income greater than 2.0 times the wage.

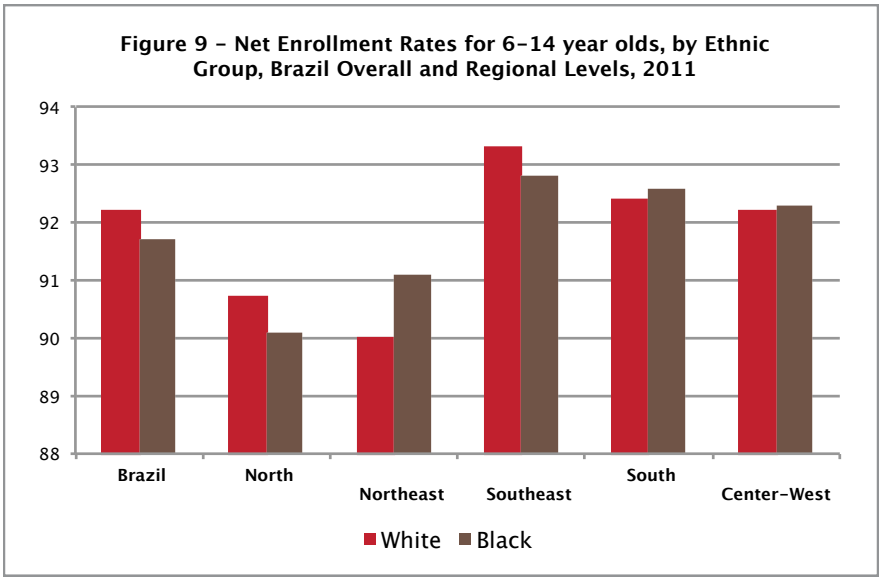


Race/Ethnicity Differences

It is difficult to distinguish net effects of race/ethnicity and income, because they are historically and structurally linked. In addition, research focusing on these kinds of inequalities in Brazil emerged only in the late1980s. However, official data indicate that, if compared, inequalities have been significantly reduced from 1992 to 2011 (see Figure 8). And, moreover, the present NER of white students is not to much higher than that of black students, at national level, as well as in each region (see Figure 9).



Source: IBGE/PNAD



Source: IBGE/PNAD

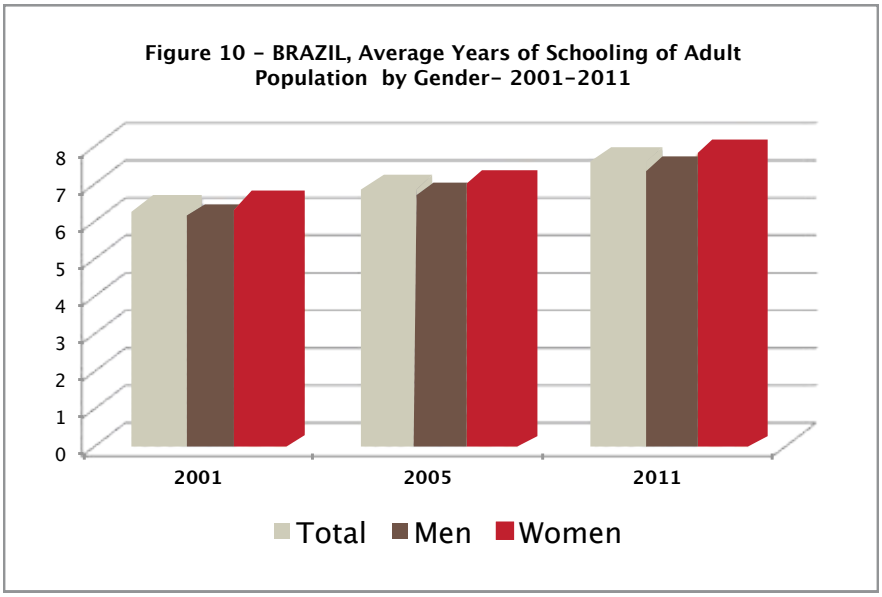
Gender Differences

Unlike some other developing countries, Brazilian female students have had slightly higher enrollment rates than their male peers, at least for the years 1970 to 1990 (see Table 3). This trend appears to have continued in that the average number of years of schooling attained by adult females was higher than adult males for 2001, 2005, and 2011 (see Figure 10).

Table 3 - BRAZIL: Elementary Schooling Net Enrollment Rates by Gender (%) 1970-2010

YEARS	Women			Man		
	School Age Population	Enrollments	NER (&)	School Age Population	Enrollments	NER (&)
	(Thousands)			(Thousands)		
1970	9,767.7	6,619.7	67.8	9,925.3	6,590.3	66.4
1980	11,401.3	9,201.5	80.7	12,580.7	9,275.5	73.7
1991	13,670.9	11,483.6	84.0	13,940.6	11,445.2	82.1
2000	13,409.6	12,719.5	94.9	13,781.3	12,975.8	94.2
2010	12,926.1	12,552.2	97.1	13,383.5	12,936.2	96.7

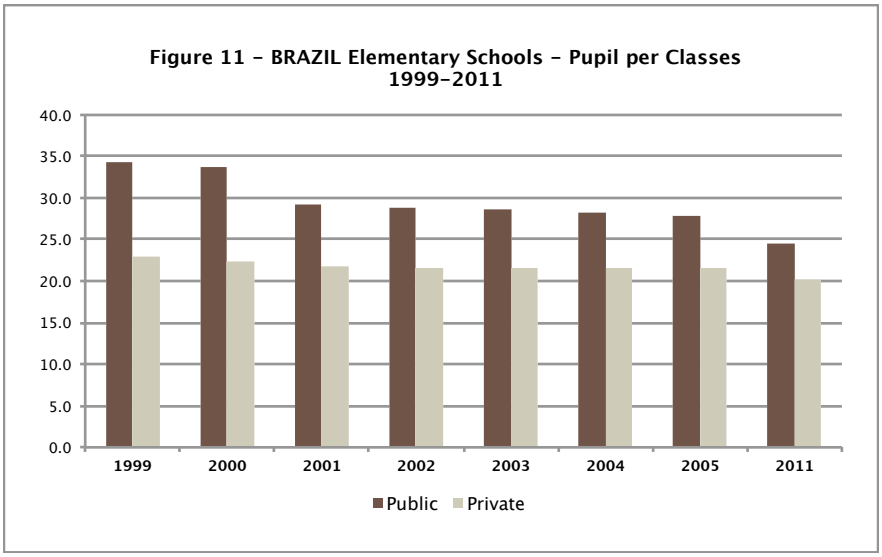
Sources: IBGE Demographic Census; Ministry of Education



Pattern of Education Quality

One (input) measure of education quality is the student-teacher ratio. Some view this as a measure of educational quality based on the assumption that smaller class sizes provide better learning opportunities for students. This is despite research suggesting a weak effect of class size on learning outcomes (Wossmann & West, 2006; Fuchs & Wossmann, 2007; Felício & Fernandes, 2005; Ireland et al., 2007). From the 1950s through the 1970s, as new schools were built to accommodate growing demand, there were shortages of qualified teachers. Regions demanded an expansion of pedagogical secondary schools to increase the teacher supply. In the 1980s, however, debates ensued regarding whether secondary education was sufficient preparation for becoming an elementary school teacher. This led to the growth of teacher preparation courses in higher education institutions in all regions of the country, especially as the federal government implemented its higher education reform beginning in 1968, centered in the development of federal research universities.

In any case, we note that the student-teacher ratio improved, at least between 1999 and 2011. As shown in Figure 11, the average class size in public elementary schools decreased during this period from approximately 35 to approximately 25 students per class.



However, there is some question as to whether the increased length of preparation of elementary teachers constitutes an improvement in teaching quality (Carnoy et al., 2008). In addition, Gatti and Barreto (2009) argue that the rapid expansion of teacher preparation at the post-secondary level devalued the former source of elementary school teachers from specialized upper secondary schools—the *curso normal colegial*. This means that, in a decade, new teachers became more formally "scholarized" (the average years of study tend to reach near 15 instead of the previous 11) but less qualified to teach children, especially in the initial years of elementary school. As shown in Table 4, between 1991 and 2010 the percentage of teachers of initial grades (first to fifth) of elementary school who were prepared at the higher education level increased from 19.2 percent and 62.4 percent.[24]

This question is closely tied to the unconcluded reform of elementary education. As a matter of fact there had not been a deeper "fusion" between primary and lower secondary schools, but a juxtaposition of them. So, the "new" university-educated teacher of the initial grades – this usual terms expresses the nature of pedagogical "differences" – could not have the same "ethos" (and skills) of the former primary teacher. And it may be one the main factors contributing to lower learning outcomes in elementary schools (for example, retention and completion rates, achievement test scores) (Luzano et al., 2010; Namo de Melo, 2000).

[24] Note that during this period (1991–2010) the percentage of teachers in the final grades (grade 6 to 8) of elementary school who had been prepared at the post-secondary level increased only slightly from 73.0 percent to 79.2 percent, because such teachers were already fairly likely to have been university graduates in 1991 – and since the years 60's.

Table 4 - BRAZIL Elementary Schools Educational Level of Teacher Training (%) by Grades They Teach				
YEARS	1st to 5th grades		6th to 9th grades	
	Secondary	Higher	Secondary	Higher
1991	63.4	19.2	25.5	73.0
1996	64.4	20.3	25.3	73.7
2002	66.9	30.3	24.5	75.2
2005	51.1	47.8	16.8	83.2
2010	37.0	62.4	20.3	79.2
Source: Ministry of Education				

Another (input) indicator of education quality is the availability of facilities, such as libraries or reading environments, and computers and Internet access. There is a basic threshold below which students' academic performance can be severely affected; many schools are located in very poor areas and less developed regions, and serve students from poorer families—a critical situation (Alves & Soares, 2013).

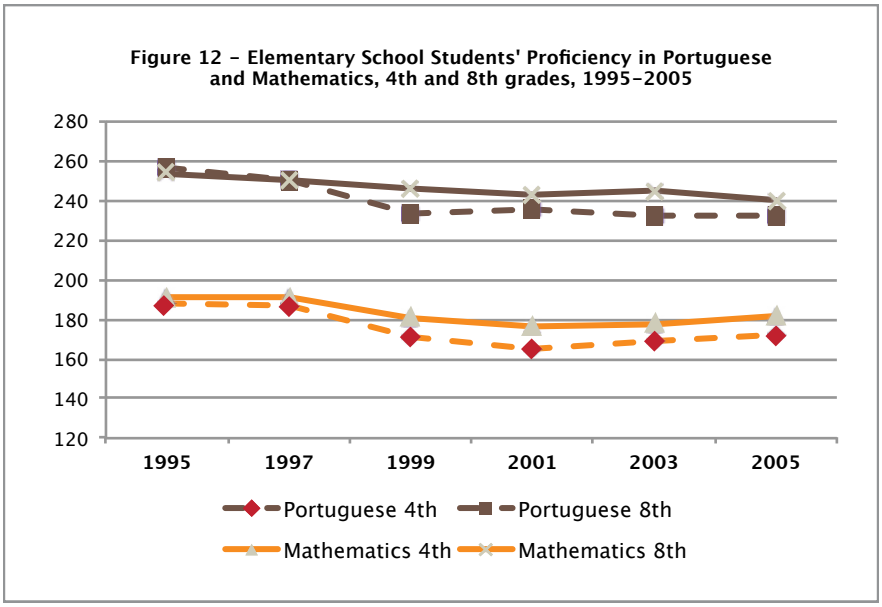
Table 5 presents findings from data of the Ministry's School Census of 2011, evaluating the infrastructure (building, equipment) of around 195,000 schools (public and private, rural and urban). This table shows the frequencies and percentages of schools ranked on a scale of quality of infrastructure, categorized as elementary (that is, 20 to 50 points), basic (that is, 50 to 60 points), adequate (60 to 70 points), and advanced (that is, 70 to 80 points). Looking at this this table, overall in Brazil 44.5 percent of the schools are categorized as below "basic" (that is, elementary), and that this percentage varies from 17.6 percent in the center-east region to 65.1 percent and 71.0 percent in the northeast and north regions, respectively (see also Soares Neto, 2013, p. 92).

Table 5 - Brazil Level of Quality of Schools Infrastructure - 2011									
Regions	Elementary		Basic		Adequated		Advanced		TOTAL
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
BRAZIL	86,739	44.5	78,047	40.0	29,026	14.9	1,120	0.6	194,932
Norte	17,090	71.0	5,353	22.2	1,565	6.5	71	0.3	24,079
Nordeste	49,338	65.1	20,912	27.6	5,376	7.1	205	0.3	75,831
Sudeste	13,478	22.7	33,826	57.0	11,738	19.8	322	0.5	59,364
Sul	5,078	19.8	12,819	49.9	7,393	28.8	420	1.6	25,710
Centrooeste	1,755	17.6	5,137	51.6	2,954	29.7	102	1.0	9,948
Source: basic data from Ministry of Education, apud Joaquim J.Soares Neto et al, 2013									

In the late 1980s, discussions about education quality increasing included a focus on student learning outcomes. Brazil developed an assessment system, testing national samples of students in the Portuguese (mother language) and mathematics at the end of first phase (grade 4) and at end of elementary education (grade 8) every other year. The *Sistema de Avaliação da Educação Básica* (National System for Evaluation of Basic Education or SAEB) was first administered in 1993 and then was expanded by incorporating into SAEB the *Prova Brasil* (Brazil Test), which is administered to all students in grades 5 and 9 in schools that have at least 20 students, measuring learning outcomes in Portuguese and mathematics.[25]

Comparable measurements on the SAEB for the decade 1995–2005 show declining results (see Figure 12). Moreover, in 2005 only a quarter of students scored above what are considered the minimum desirable levels of achievement: a) 200 and 225 in Portuguese grades 4 and 8, respectively, and b) 275 and 300 in mathematics in grades 4 and 8, respectively.[26]

Figure 12 – Elementary School Students' Proficiency in Portuguese and Mathematics, 4th and 8th grades, 1995–2005



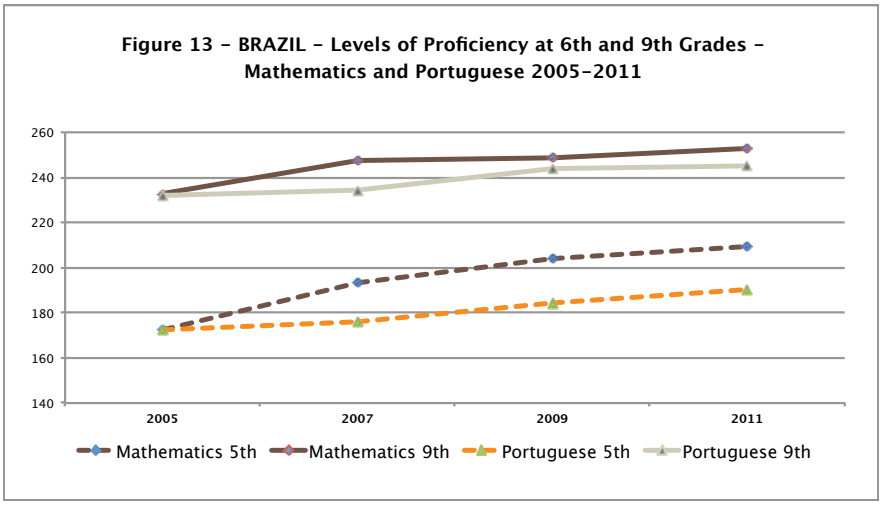
Source – Ministry of Education

[25] Beginning in 1993 the Ministry of Education, in coordination with the state education secretariats, worked to implement the (SAEB). Since 1995 that system adopted more sophisticated methods and procedures recommended by international agencies (such as, Item Response Theory (IRT) and solid information technology support), which has allowed SAEB results to be used in international and inter-temporal comparisons. In 2005, this system was expanded by integrating the SAEB with the *Prova Brasil* (Brazil Test), which is administered to all students in basic education.

[26] These values were proposed by *Todos pela Educação*, an NGO that manages the monitoring system for the National Plan of Education.

However, between 2005 and 2011, one observes a trend of improving performance in Portuguese and mathematics, based on data from the new examination which integrated the *Prova Brasil* and the SAEB and was administered to fifth and ninth graders (see Figure 13). Despite this improvement, the results in 2011 still show that 60 percent and 79 percent of the fifth grade students and 55 percent and 68 percent of the ninth grade students scored below the minimum desired achievement levels in Portuguese and mathematics.[27]

Figure 13: Student Performance in Mathematics and Portuguese, 2005-2011



[27] The scenario of student performance on the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) is similar to that for the results of the SAEB and *Provo Brasil*. That is, the performance of 15 year olds showed gradual improvement across the assessments in reading, mathematics, and sciences conducted in 2000, 2003, 2006, and 2009. As Soares and Nascimento (2012, p. 83) observe, "Brazil achieved greater gains in mathematics [compared to reading] partly because it managed to reduce inequality in scores in that subject. … [Nevertheless,] Brazil's positive evolution in the PISA has not yet been enough to promote significant leaps upwards in its ranking vis-à-vis other countries. Generally speaking, the basic education of our young people remains low quality."

It is also important to note that there are critical regional inequalities in student performance. As shown in Table 6, the average scores on the Portuguese and mathematics tests in 2011 in the north and northeast regions are substantially below those of other regions.

Table 6: Regional Differences in Student Performance in Portuguese and Mathematics in 5th and 9th Grades in 2011

Table 6 - Regional Differences in Student Performance in Portuguese and Mathematics in 5th and 9th Grades in 2011 Levels of Proficiency at 5th and 9th grades Portuguese and Mathematics - 2011				
Regions	Portuguese		Mathematics	
	5th	**9th**	**5th**	**9th**
BRAZIL	190.6	243.0	209.6	250.6
North	176.7	233.1	191.5	237.2
Northeast	174.6	229.4	190.6	235.9
Southeast	201.6	251.1	223.2	259.1
South	199.4	249.3	221.1	260.3
Center-West	197.8	245.7	215.9	253.3
Source: Ministry of Education				

Key Drivers and Impediments of Change

In this section are factors that contributed to the historical patterns of access, retention, and quality in Brazil, overall and for various subgroups. Attention is given to policy, program, and project initiatives that shaped the patterns across different time periods.

Policies Affecting Access and Retention

The political will of federal government officials, in the context of a federated state, should be mentioned first. Federal actions were motivated by goals of industrialization and economic modernization as well as concerns to maintain social cohesion during the accompanying process of urbanization. Federal officials managed political and fiscal resources to induce state and local government agencies and actors to meet the social demands of the middle class of medium and large cities as well as residents of the more modest new neighborhoods that had multiplied in the outskirts of these urban centers.[28]

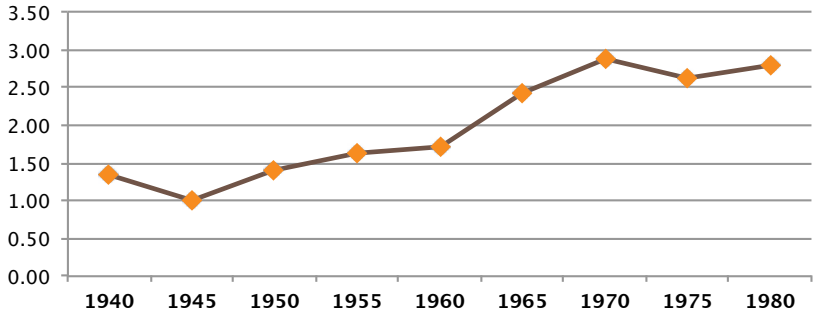
The political will of federal government officials was not only signaled by the declaration in the 1946 Constitution that education should be compulsory. It was also evidenced by the Constitution's mandate that a specified portion of tax revenues be devoted to funding education services (reinforced in the 1961 Guidelines and Bases of Education Law). Similarly, federal law enacted in 1968 stipulated that at least 20 percent of the intergovernmental transfers from federal government to states and municipalities should be allocated to education[29] by means, respectively, of the Municipal Participation Fund (FPM) and the State Participation Fund (FPE), which are derived from shares of federal taxes.

That federal government officials were committed to expanding education provision, moreover, is shown in Figure 13, which presents public expenditures in education as a percentage of GDP between 1940 and 1980. A pattern of increase occurs in this statistic from 1945 to 1970, and a particularly sharp increase from 1960 to 1970. Although between 1970 and 1980 the statistic remains relatively constant (between 2.5 percent and 3.0 percent) during this entire period GDP was also increasing.

[28] The influence-patronage relationship was indirect. For example, a city councilor communicates the demand for primary schools to the town mayors or state education officials. When the demands were met, the city councilor would be supported by the families in the following election as well as support the mayor in various political projects (see Plank, 1996). In turn, the mayors or state education officials also give support to federal officials in exchange for fiscal resources transferred from federal budgets to support their policies, especially that of education. Lacking a consolidated civic history, Brazil emulates the Italian south described by Putnam (1993) when writing about clientelist traditions. In such political environments, those in power use their access to state resources to provide personal favors to a broad-based clientele network to mobilize votes and influence. In Brazil, the clientelist tradition is reinforced through the federative regimen, making room for vast political machines supporting complex favor exchange practices. In the cities, for instance, neighborhood associations play a critical role in these linkages, operated by *cabos eleitorais*" (ward bosses), and are used to mobilize votes for their party's candidates by conveying promises of favors to local residents.

[29] These funds were financed by two classes of taxes (on incomes and on industrial goods), which, combined constituted almost two thirds of federal revenues.

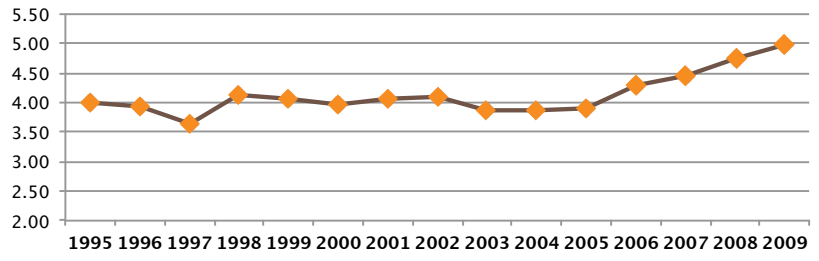
Figure 14 – BRAZIL, Public Expenditures in Education as Share of GDP 1945–1980



The political will of federal government officials was further documented in 1996, when it established via Constitutional Amendment the Fund for Development and Maintenance of Basic Education and Teaching Values (FUNDEF). This amendment made enforceable a national minimum level of expenditure per pupil in basic education. It also established a rule by which state and municipal schools partake, according to their respective enrollment loads, a fund compounded by 25 percent of all the state and local net tax revenues of the respective federated unit. And, in the cases where this fund does not suffice to achieve this minimum, federal resources were to be added to equalize it. Finally, from the funds available, 60 percent was to be allocated to improving teachers' salaries and professional development, while 40 percent was directed to cover school direct costs.

This fund was expanded in 2006, by means of Constitutional Amendment no 53, giving way to The Fund for Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and the Appreciation of Professionals of Education (FUNDEB), which extends the mechanism to all levels of basic education (pre-school, elementary, secondary, and youth and adult education) and offers resources and benefits for the professionals of the system. From then, public expenditure at all levels reached a new threshold, above 3.5 percent of the GDP (see Figure 15).

Figure 15 – BRAZIL, Public Expenditures in Education After FUNDEF as Share of GDP 1995–2009



The active role of the federal government was made possible because Brazil has not only set relatively high tax rates, but also has been effective in collecting taxes. In 1964 the federal government enacted the Salário Educação Law, which required that companies contribute to the National Treasury the equivalent of 2.4 percent of their salary bill. Brazil had one of the highest tax rates as a percentage of GDP in Latin America during the 1970s (that is, 27 percent).

Even after decentralizing responsibility for the management of the education system, the federal government continued to play an important planning and catalyzing role. After passing the 1971 law reforming elementary education, the federal government planned state and local level operations to construct school buildings, hire and train teachers, and purchase furniture and teaching materials,[30] which enabled and encouraged access to—and, likely improved the quality of—elementary education. As a leading officer in the Ministry of Education at that time states, our main strategy "to improve schooling opportunities was almost exclusively to build new classrooms."

After the 1961 and particularly the 1971 laws were enacted, the states gradually formulated their own plans and developed capacity for implementing them. More developed states approved laws complementing the resources (20 percent of tax revenues) provided by the federal government with their own appropriations. By the end of the 1980s, with increased urbanization, it became much more difficult for states to manage centrally the increased number of localities. As Bruns et al. (2012, p. 4) report, the "national landscape was an administratively confused welter of state and municipal schools that were geographically proximate but had very different levels of per student resources and quality."

Furthermore, after re-democratization and the new Constitution in 1988, there was a stronger demand for local political and administrative autonomy. In this context the national government established the *Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica e de Valorização dos Profissionais da Educação* (FUNDEF or Fund for the Development of Basic Education and Appreciation of Education Professionals) and, subsequently, the *Fundo de Desenvolvimento do Ensino Fundamental e de Valorização do Magistério* (FUNDEB or Fund for the Development of Basic Education and Appreciation of Teachers)[31] and sought to promote broad changes in the funding and managerial practices of education in states and municipalities. These funds compelled a) municipalities to assume greater responsibilities in the operation of basic education and b) states to assume roles formerly attributed to federal government, in coordinating and supporting local school systems.

[30] As the expansion of schooling gave increased access to children coming from low-middle and working class families, the supply of textbooks was not sufficient and their price increased. So, in the mid-1960s, a program was started by the federal government to purchase textbooks and give them to elementary school pupils. By the 1990s, nearly four billion books were being purchased each year from large commercial publishers, many of which developed because of the incentives of these programs.

[31] These were important tools in funding policies of basic education. First, in 1996, Congress passed the Law No. 9.424, creating the FUNDEF. Later, in 2007, it was expanded when Congress approved the Law No. 11.494, creating the FUNDEB, including rules and resources to finance pre-school, elementary, and middle level education and nonformal education for youth and adults.

Programs Affecting Access and Retention

For three decades (1980–2010) all levels of government pursued two main policy initiatives to address problems of low efficiency—grade repetition and its impact on dropout. The first was termed "*automatic promotion*" and the second was labeled "cycling." The automatic progression initiative, which was pioneered in four states,[32] sought to reduce repetition by postponing promotion decisions from first to either third or fourth grades. Students were taught for two or four years without interruption, and evaluated at the end of this period, Furthermore, to support this policy initiative teachers and principals received additional training, schools were better equipped, and free textbooks and student materials were provided. There are no quantitative assessments of this initiative, but reports and qualitative studies suggest that there were varying degrees of success in reducing repetition and dropout.[33] Various authors agree, however, that the initiatives have not been able to address the core issues: improving pupils' learning and promoting youths' literacy abilities (Barreto & Souza, 2004; Fernandes, 2005; Gomes, 2004; Neubauer & Davis, 1993).

A second policy initiative, cycling, was undertaken in the context of debate about the appropriateness and impact of automatic promotion. This initiative entails establishing learning targets for pupils to achieve in each sub-period (three months, for instance). Then after being evaluated, pupils are helped to overcome their weaknesses and be promoted to next step. This policy was implemented initially beginning in the late 1980s in São Paulo and Minas Gerais. In addition, the initiative included teacher training and wage incentives, innovative instructional materials, and improved facilities and school equipment. Although this initiative was criticized by the teacher unions, the academic community, and other citizens, a survey of studies concludes that "the mere enlargement of the time available to learn and avoid repetition, emphasis in learning assessment and superficial changes in curriculum, do not assure, by itself, learning improvements for every student, as expected of an effective school" (Mainardes & Gomes, 2008, p. 43; see also Beserra, 2006; Knoblauch, 2003; Petrenas, 2006; Souza, 2007).

Brazil pursued a number of internationally financed programs designed to increase access, retention, and quality of education, particularly in the less developed areas of the country. Instead of low-scale programs or specific projects, these new models of action (EDURURAL, Monhangara, Northeastern Basic Education, Bolsa Escola, and Bolsa Familiar projects) sought to reach identified education clients in determined localities. Specifically, they aimed at municipalities with greater socio-economic and education needs. At the same time, these programs adopted strategies integrating an array of components, such as: a) building schools with specific dimensions; b) qualifying and training of teachers, supervisors and administrative support staff; c) developing curriculum, distributing school books and individual student material kits; d) providing school meals; e) supporting the development of municipal education management agencies. In addition, these operations incorporated systems for monitoring and evaluating implementation and impact of the program.

[32] One of them, in southern region (State of Santa Catarina), had been the larger and more debated, lasted for almost 15 years (1970–1984) before being discontinued. Also in Pernambuco, São Paulo (1968–1972) and Rio de Janeiro (1979–1984) this kind of program of notable size was implemented.

[33] The assessment of such programs concludes: "annual grades regime and repetition cannot, alone, be assumed as cause of school failure. Otherwise, cycle and automatic promotion cannot be assumed as the great solution to these problems – as many policymakers believe" (Fernandes, 2005, p.15).

EDURURAL devoted US$91 million—a third of which was financed by the World Bank—to expand the number of classrooms in rural areas in the 218 poorest municipalities in the states of the northeast region. During its seven years of execution (1981–1988), 3,690 classrooms were remodeled and equipped, 12,000 supervisors and thousands of staff members were qualified and trained, and 5.2 million books and 4 million student kits were distributed. As shown in Table 7, a greater percentage of the quality indicators improved between 1983 and 1985 in EDURURAL schools than was the case in other schools in the respective departments, with the difference being most apparent in the Piaui region (75 percent versus 38 percent).

Table 7 - Edurural Outcomes in Three Northeastern States Distribution of 16 School Quality Indicators by direction of changes from 1983 to 1985 in Edurural and Non-Edurural Locals

Period	Piaui			Ceará			Pernambuco			Overall
	Edural	Others	Total	Edural	Others	Total	Edural	Others	Total	
1985>1983	75.0	38.0	50.0	88.0	69.0	69.0	81.0	75.0	81.0	75.0
1985-1983	0.0	19.0	19.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
1985<1983	25.0	44.0	31.0	6.0	25.0	25.0	13.0	19.0	13.0	19.0

Source: Harbison & Hanushek,1992

The Monhangara Project was smaller, reaching only 25 municipalities, but was embedded with a distinct element that was replicated in the following years: the technical domain and application of micro-planning methods to optimize location, program, and management of schools in each municipality.

Based on lessons learned from EDURURAL and Monhangara, the World Bank financed subsequently an even bigger initiative—the Northeastern Basic Education Project. It was prepared from 1992–1994, and was launched in 1995. The project was managed by a special planning and operational agency, called the Fund for School Strengthening and Development (FUNDESCOLA), which had been created with support of UNDP to deal with technical and administrative issues. There were two phases of this project, both supported by a series of World Bank loans, from1991–2004.

The first phase of the project (1991–1997), a “learning phase” named FUNDESCOLA I, targeted the north and center-west regions. FUNDESCOLA I was developed to test some innovative policies and operational program methods of planning and management. It was highly successful in improving basic equipment and the infrastructure in 11,000 schools in its Priority Attention Zones; providing opportunities to more than 558,000 pupils, and thus increasing net enrollment rates by almost 50 percent in targeted zones, by implementing school development plans, and improving mechanisms of coordination between municipal/state authorities through Microregion Action Programs.

The second phase of the project (1997–2004) was designed to expand the achievements of FUNDESCOLA I reaching additional *microregions* (involving 10 to 20 municipalities) in the northeast as well as the north and center-west regions. The budget for FUNDESCOLA II was nearly US$410 million, including the World Bank loan plus the government's contribution of US$225 million. According to the World Bank (2002), the project helped targeted schools to reach "minimum operational standards" in their equipment, infrastructure and teaching resources. In addition, the project implemented a Model School Program in 1,150 schools. This initiative sought to strengthen control and responsibilities of municipal administration and communities over schools, reducing political patronage while empowering teachers and principals to create and implement school development plans, which were financially supported by FUNDEF.

In terms of the FUNDESCOLA II's impact on student learning outcomes, Horn (2002, p.3) reports that, "the project is having a positive impact on 4th grade student achievement in Portuguese in each of the three regions." It was observed that between 2001 and 2003 the percentage of fourth-graders performing at the "adequate" level in Portuguese language increased, while the percentage performing at the "very critical" level declined. Students from the center-west region had the greatest gains, followed by those from the northeast region.[34]

Another step forward was given when access and retention policies for children of poor families were linked to policies addressing poverty and income inequalities, made possible by economic stabilization and by the economic growth occurring after 2000. For instance, the local Federal District government initiated in 1995 a cash transfer program to poor families, which was conditional upon the children in these families attending school. This program, *Bolsa Escola*, was evaluated as very successful, in that it received a prize from the United Nations.

In 2001, the federal government decided to implement the program on a national scale, by means of the *Bolsa Escola* Federal Program. By 2002, almost all the municipalities in Brazil were participating in the program that cost approximate R$2 billion per year and reached nearly 5 million children.

In 2004, the federal government developed this initiative further by creating the *Bolsa Família* Program, providing it with more robust elements under the command of the new Ministry of Social Development and Hunger Alleviation (MDS). This program targeted the entire population of poor (with minimal income per person of R$60.01 to R$120.00) and extremely poor (minimal income of less than R$60.00) families.[35] *Bolsa Família* consists of three main components: a) *direct distribution of income*, promoting immediate relief of poverty through financial support given directly to families via a bank card; b) *conditionality,* reinforcing access to basic social rights in education, health, and social welfare; and c) *complementary actions and programs*, seeking to overcome other factors of social vulnerability in families.[36]

[34] There are a few independent, empirical studies evaluating project implementation and results (for example, see Oliveira, Fonseca & Toschi, 2005; Horn, 2002) The main source of results are the World Bank assessment reports, as recorded in the Implementation Completion Report (World Bank, 2002). Some important insights here are also based on an interview with the former executive director of FUNDESCOLA.

[35] At that moment, these families would have the monthly income per person of around US$30.

[36] In association with educational secretaries from the states, the Federal District, and municipalities, since 2005 the Ministry of Education has been collecting permanent registration and information forms for students, schools, and teachers of the National Basic Education (kindergarten, elementary school and secondary school) from all the municipal, state, federal, and private units.

Other programs, developed jointly by the Ministries of Education and MDS, were operated by municipal educational administrations. They sought to develop the basic operational conditions of schools, especially equipment and availability of school material and books. However, an important role was given to the *Sistema Presença*, by which the Ministry of Education (beginning in 2005) was able to monitor access and attendance for each student in each school.

A recent evaluation, making use of such data, showed that promotion rates in elementary schools increased from 80.5 percent to 83.9 percent between 2008 and 2011. The dropout rates among pupils assisted by *Bolsa Família* fell to 2.9 percent (in 2011) compared to the national average of 3.2 percent of all students in elementary schools. In addition, a higher proportion of students are reaching secondary school. In part, this is due to the decrease of student absenteeism (Glewwe & Kassouf, 2008; Soares, 2012).

The Federal government created the Support to School Transport National Program in 2004 to enable children residing in rural areas to attend schools in cities. The states and municipalities receive financial resources to purchase vehicles and cover other expenses (such as, vehicle maintenance, fuel). After its creation in 2007, state and municipal school administrations could submit grant proposals to FUNDEB for such projects, proportional to the number of pupils to be assisted, mainly in rural areas. At the same time, the federal government authorized public banks (BNDES – *Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico*/National Bank for Social Economic Development and BB – *Banco do Brasil*) to establish subsidized credit lines to state and municipalities to acquire the needed vehicles, through the *Caminho da Escola* program. In 2013, approximately two-thirds of municipalities participated in the grant program, serving nearly 4.7 million students at an annual cost of more than US$300 million. A similar amount is provided by BNDES or BB to finance such projects in more than 1,800 municipalities.

Conclusion

Brazil made noticeable progress in access and retention to elementary education opportunities. In 1950 Brazil had one of the lowest levels of access in South America and devoted only modest amounts to funding for educational resources (such as, facilities, teachers, and textbooks). By the end of the 1960s, however, state and local governments made use of innovative funding arrangements to increase primary schools enrollments. A second step, yet more important, was combining primary and lower secondary levels into a single elementary school, with the aim of universalizing attainment of eight grades of education. With improvements in institution building and a reduction of political bias in allocation and administrative capacities, Brazil was able to reach enrollment rates near to 80 percent.

At this point two major challenges remain: 1) reducing regional disparities, particularly by increasing access in less developed states (north, northeast, and, center-west) and 2) reducing inequalities based on socioeconomic status of families. The first challenge had been addressed mainly by implementing the Monhangara and EDURURAL programs, such that regional differences in access and retention rates had all but disappeared by the early 1990s. The remaining regional differences in enrollment rates were basically eliminated by the late 1990s through FUNDESCOLA initiatives.

Dealing with the second challenge required a huge effort. This entailed devoting financial resources to increasing provision in inner cities as well as other areas in which poor families resided. It also involved providing direct subsidies to poor families to help the meet basic needs and also to compensate them for the income lost when their children attended school instead of engaged in economic activities.

Nevertheless, there remains work to be done with respect to improving education quality, and this work is critical to Brazil's future social and economic development.

For example, curriculum and pedagogy reform are needed in the upper elementary (former lower secondary) school, grades 6 to 9. Given advances in human sciences, the rapid changes in information and communication technologies, and the new realities of youth (that is, changing their lifestyles, beliefs, ways to learn), Brazilian schools cannot continue to function as they have in past decades.

The quality of teaching remains a threat to students' learning. In recent years, however, some progress has been made in upgrading the level and quality of pre-service teacher education in universities and in improving mechanisms for continuous professional development of in-service teachers.

There is also a need for developing policymaking and management capacity within the education sector. The democratic prospects ushered in by the 1988 Constitution—decentralization and municipalization—has resulted in the emergence of thousands of little settlements established as municipalities, but that do not have the technical and managerial capabilities—and fiscal resources—to run school systems, even under the supervision of state governments.

In addition, although political dynamics have changed, clientelism remains a factor in school systems. This constrains efficiency in resource allocation and adoption of more effective education policies. Fortunately, several NGOs are working to stimulate and to provide technical assistance to local authorities in developing innovative educational approaches and managerial strategies. Such efforts are also being supported by private sector companies pursuing social responsibility initiatives as well as by NGOs. In this context, the role of international or multilateral agencies in influencing education policies or in stimulating project management has been scaled back.

The last cycle of economic growth—and equally important, of political stability—supplied sufficient resources to achieve near universal access and increase retention and completion rates. Nevertheless, future efforts are needed to address issues of quality and relevance in education, while reducing social, ethnic, and gender inequalities in access to quality and relevant education.

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