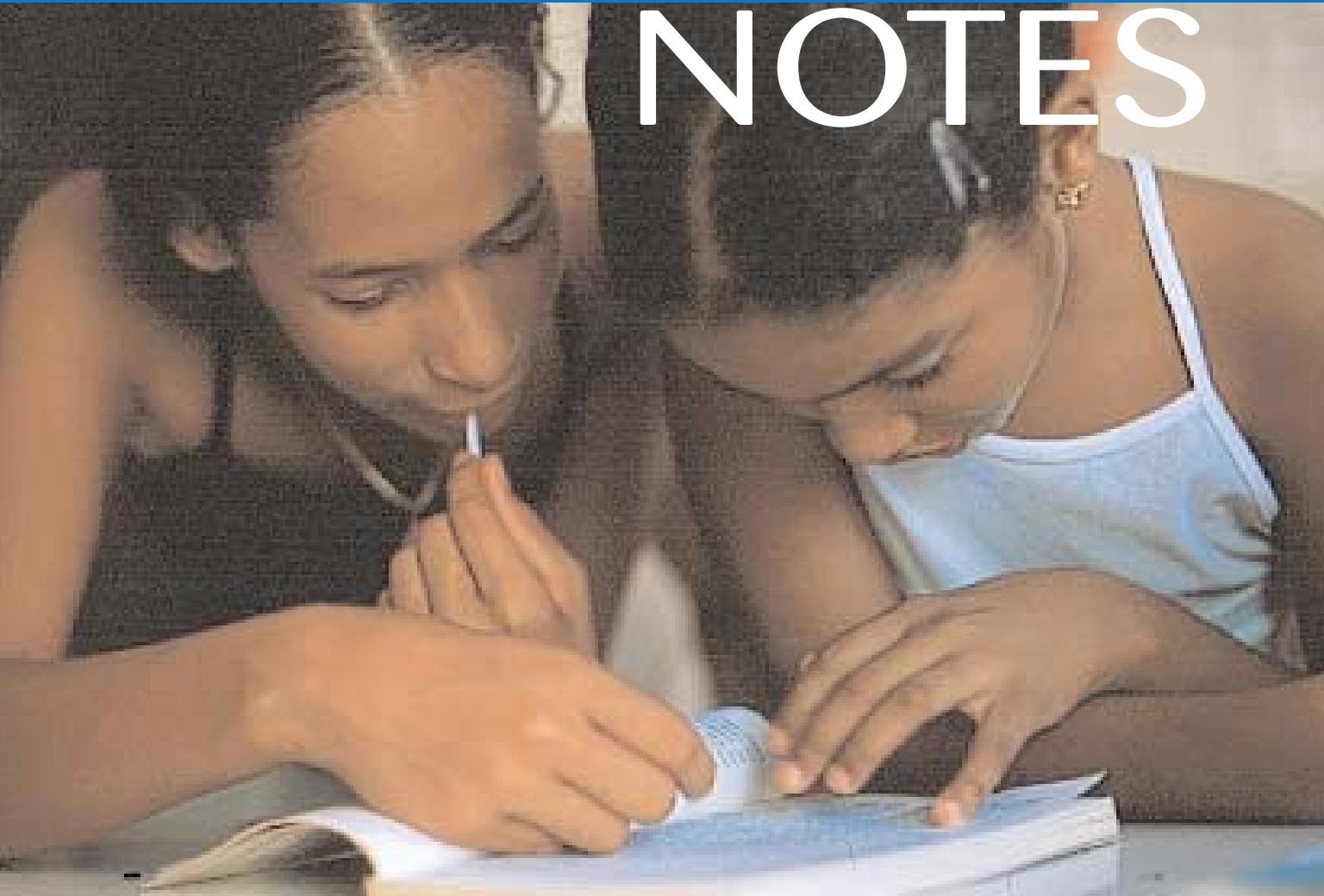


Education NOTES

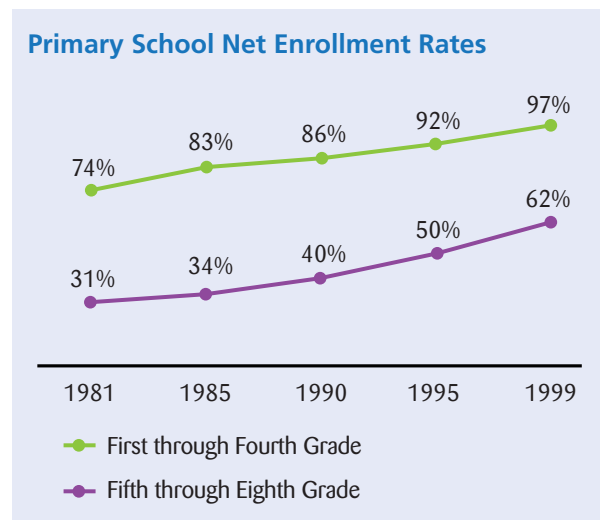


Big Steps in a Big Country: Brazil Makes Fast Progress Toward EFA

Brazil is one of the few large countries in the world to make real progress toward EFA over the course of the 1990s. Remarkably, it did this during a period of low GDP growth, economic instability and tight budgets. [Brazil's success is thus an encouraging precedent for countries facing similar constraints, and it underscores the message that by focusing on policy reform, and making difficult choices consistent with policy objectives, countries can achieve renewed momentum towards EFA.](#)

Progress Highlights

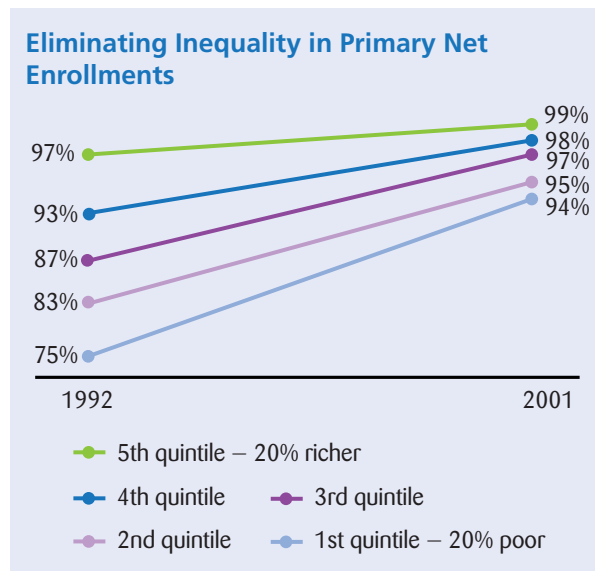
- By the year 2000, Brazil had almost achieved universal primary enrollment for Grades 1-4, and more than 50 million Brazilians were enrolled in the country's education system. From 1970 to 2000, 32 million additional students entered school, two-thirds of them during the last two decades. Over a five-year period (1996-2000), while primary schooling continued to make important gains, enrollments in secondary and tertiary education in Brazil grew at the astonishing rate of 43% and 44% respectively.



- Many developing countries face problems with age-grade distortion. Largely because of high repetition rates, age-grade distortion in Brazil is about 10 percent country-wide, and almost 40 percent in the northeastern part of the country. An innovative program called Accelerated Learning has been implemented to address this issue. Under this program, the federal government finances the creation of special classes for over-aged students with the objective of reducing the age-grade distortion and freeing up space in public schools. By year 2000 there were already 1.2 million students enrolled in accelerated learning programs in all Brazilian states.

- Brazil has significantly reduced education inequality over the past decade. The gap between enrollments of children from low- and high-income levels has been decreasing. In 1992, enrollment of students from low-income families was 22 percentage points

lower than for those from high-income families; this gap has now been reduced to only six points. Gender parity has now been largely reached for primary and secondary schooling. An enormous gap remains at the tertiary level, however, where only 18% of the students are female, and this will need to be the focus of concerted efforts for years to come.



Financing and Decentralization

For the most part, the government did not make significant new financing available to the education sector, but relied on reallocations from higher education and better management of funds through formula-driven, decentralized transfers for basic education. From 1995 through 1999, federal expenditure in higher education fell from US\$3.6 billion to US\$3 billion, even though higher education enrollments were expanding rapidly. This policy remains controversial. Other funds for educational reform came from largely eliminating negotiated transfers.

To improve accountability among its various levels, the Ministry of Education underwent a fiscal realignment and decentralization. The financing of education was reorganized and the responsibilities of the three levels of government were more sharply defined. The National Fund for Fundamental Education Development and Improvement of the Teaching Profession (FUNDEF) was established. FUNDEF is the principal channel by which funding is provided to schools. It specifically benefits

primary education. Government taxes are collected and redistributed to provide a minimum per student expenditure amount. With stable funding assured, state and municipal secretariats are able to conduct long-term planning for their education systems. However, Brazil's experience also shows the power of negative incentives, and the unintended consequences that can result: the creation of the FUNDEF excluded preschool and inadvertently created a very strong incentive at the municipal level against financing preschools. As a result, enrollment in preschool declined by nearly two million between 1996 and 2000.

The Direct Transfers to Schools Program (PDDE) sends money directly to schools to be spent according to their needs. This stands in contrast to previous funding that was disseminated from the central government. To be eligible for the funds, schools must: (i) enroll more than 150 students; (ii) hold a bank account in which the funds can be deposited; and (iii) have a school council to oversee use of the funds. The program provides schools with resources while empowering the community to better spend them, shifting more power to the local level.

In some states, school directors are now being chosen through a combination of technical examinations and elections by the school community. By allowing communities ownership of these decisions, the communities and their education leaders become more accountable to each other.

Quality Issues

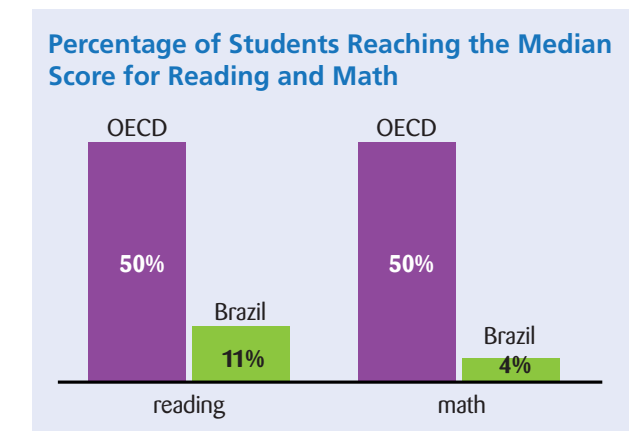
In conjunction with other reforms, the government is focusing on teachers as one of the important factors of student learning. Teachers are often poorly qualified and underpaid, resulting in low motivation. New teacher education programs promote assessment and evaluation. A Teacher Education Institute (ISE) was recently established to increase the quality of teacher education. Using an internationally proven approach, the institute focuses on teacher development and incentives and ensures that the teachers have, at least, completed secondary education.

An Education Management Information System (EMIS) has been established to collect reliable and timely data—this is of critical importance in decision-making and planning processes, including the transfer of funding to schools. The Ministry of Education monitors and evalu-

ates its education system through surveys, data collection, and research. The results are openly available to the public, are published on the Internet, and are disseminated throughout the country. The country conducts a student census, student assessment tests, the evaluation of tertiary level courses, and the secondary level student exit examination. The National Integrated System for Education Information (SIEd) promotes the decentralization of the education census and its results.

The National System for Evaluation of Basic Education (SAEB) is a standardized testing system implemented in 1995. SAEB tracks student learning in both language skills and mathematics. The test is administered every two years and is given to children in the 4th and 8th grades. The National Secondary School Exam (ENEM) is administered during the final year of secondary school.

To identify areas in which quality can be improved, Brazil is evaluating its education system on many fronts. This has increased awareness and improved the level of accountability. The focus of the education debate is now not only on inputs, but, increasingly, on learning outcomes. The figure compares the results of 15-year-olds in Brazil to those in OECD countries.



Brazil participated in the OECD study in part because of its determination to increase learning quality in line with international comparators. In spite of this new focus, however, test scores unexpectedly declined between 1997 and 1999 in all states in the country. It is unclear what this represents, since many input measures show marked increases. The lower test scores could represent "growing pains", or the new reality that many are now

Education in Brazil

Socio-Economic Indicators:

Population (millions)	172.4 (2001)
Percent below poverty line	22%
GNP per capita	US\$ 3,070 (2001)
IDA/IBRD	IBRD
PRSP	No
HIPC	No

Education Indicators:

Adult illiteracy rate (population 15 and older)	12.7% (2001)
Primary gross enrollment rate (48.5% of those enrolled are female)	162.3% (2000)
Primary completion rate	71.3% (2000)
Secondary gross enrollment rate (53.3% of those enrolled are female)	108.5% (2000)
Tertiary gross enrollment rate (18% of those enrolled are female)	16.5% (2000)
Total education spending as % of GDP	4.7% (2000)

coming from the poorest areas, which have historically low enrollments and weak pre-school programs. It may also be that the process of “retooling”, as new programs are adapted and teachers learn new methods and new approaches, is simply more complex than initially believed. There is some evidence that scores are beginning to rebound; a focus on continued improvements to pre- and in-service teacher education will be critical to ensuring that teacher motivation remains high, and that gains in quality keep pace with gains in access to education for all students. Similarly, it will be important to ensure that pre-school enrollments reverse the declines of the late 90’s. Otherwise, it will be difficult to achieve needed improvements in student learning while maintaining gains in terms of equitable access to primary schooling.

Lessons Learned

- A simultaneous focus on both quality and equity concerns, far from being contradictory in nature, can actually be synergistic—efforts to improve quality and equity can be mutually reinforcing

- Strong leadership makes a difference—it is unlikely that Brazil would have shown the progress it has, without focused, determined leadership at the highest level, including a proactive, reform-minded minister
- School improvement programs must go hand in hand with programs to ensure the availability of stable financing at the school level—Brazil’s experience shows what can be achieved when schools have control over needed resources
- EFA gains will lead to pressures at higher levels of the system—this is a natural outgrowth of EFA efforts and should be incorporated into EFA planning processes
- Progress is not linear, and the retooling process involved in improving quality and reaching marginalized populations may even result in an initial dip in learning outcomes.

This note series is intended to summarize lessons learned and key policy findings on the World Bank’s work in education. The views expressed in these notes are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the World Bank. For additional copies of Education Notes, please contact the Education Advisory Service by email at eservice@worldbank.org or visit the web site: <http://www.worldbank.org/education/>