



BRAZIL - EDUCATION

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I. PRINCIPLES, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

a) General Principles

The principles established in the 1988 Brazilian Constitution are the guidelines for national education, according to which education is a right for all, duty of the State and of the family, and is to be promoted with the collaboration of society, with the objective of fully developing the person, preparing the individual for the exercise of citizenship and qualifying him/her for work."

The Federal Government is in charge of legislating on Guidelines and Bases for national education, coordinating and developing National Educational plans, and providing technical and financial assistance to the States, the Federal District and the Municipalities for the development of their educational systems and for priority assistance to compulsory schooling.

The Federal Government's role mentioned above does not exclude the responsibility of the States to, in their own sphere of action, legislate concurrently and suppletorily on matters related to their own educational systems, provided that the federal legislation is respected.

b) Aims and Objectives

The general aims and objectives of national education are expressed in specific statutory laws.

The National Educational Bases and Guidelines Law enacted in 1961 (Law no. 4.024/61, later amended by other statutory laws, no. 5.540/68, 5.692/71 e 7.044/82) is the tool which regulates aims and objectives, means and powers of educational actions.

By constitutional determination regarding the educational system, the aforementioned legislation still applies as long as it does not go against the Constitution. This ambiguity is a consequence of the absence of a new Bases and Guidelines Law and characterizes a transition phase until the new law is finally elaborated and enacted. The bill has already been submitted to congress.

According to the Bases and Guidelines Law still in force, "national education, inspired in the principles of freedom and in the ideals of human solidarity, has the purpose of:

- understanding individual rights and responsibilities, as well as those of citizens, the State and other community groups;
- respecting man's dignity and fundamental freedoms;
- strengthening national unity and international solidarity;
- integral development of the human personality and his/her participation in the work towards common welfare;
- preparing individuals and society to master scientific and technological resources which will allow the use existing possibilities to common welfare;

- protecting, disseminating and expanding cultural heritage;
- condemning any unequal treatment resulting from philosophical, political or religious belief, as well as any social classes or racial prejudices."

The general educational objectives are conceived in relation to the degree of maturity and the age group of the student. Thus, the current legislation defines distinct objectives for the different educational grades.

Fundamental education is compulsory for all children aged 7 to 14 and free at all public institutions, including those who did not have access to school at the appropriate age.

The new Constitution does not set age limits: it determines that education is compulsory, aiming at providing the necessary structure to the development of the students potential as an element of selffulfillment, training for work, and conscious exercise of citizenship.

Intermediate education is also free in public schools, although is not compulsory; it aims at the full development of adolescents, including the elements which make up the objective of fundamental education, as well as training for work, depending on the choice of each educational institution.

Higher education aims at the development of the sciences, arts, qualification of professionals at university level, research and specialization and is equally free at public schools and universities.

II. ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

a) Educational levels

The Brazilian Educational System is divided into three levels: fundamental, intermediate and higher education, the latter comprising two different levels: undergraduate and graduate. Preschool or infant education is added to this hierarchical structure, for the purpose of providing assistance to children under 7 years of age.

Any youth or adult who did not follow or finish regular schooling at the appropriate age has the possibility of making up for the delay by attending courses and supplementary examinations customizing the mode of education to this special type of student.

Besides regular education, other modes of education are offered, such as supplementary education which substitutes and complements regular schooling, providing permanent education.

The regular school year in Brazil, independently of the calendar year, covers a minimum of 180 days of effective work, excluding tests and exams, according to the current Education Law. The new National Education Bases and Guidelines Law establishes 200 school days.

Preschool education aims at supporting all aspects of child development psychomotor, cognitive, socioaffective, and linguistic; it also aims at creating conditions for the acquisition of knowledge and its progressive systematization. It comprises a diversified pedagogical program on three forms of assistance: at day nurseries, for children up to 2 years of age; in kindergartens, for children from 2 to 3 years of age; and in preschool, for children from 4 to _

years of age.

The organization and operational of specific preschool institutions follow the same rules established for fundamental school, while keeping their specificity, as determined by the characteristics of each age group. Enrollment in any of the three categories of preschool assistance depends on vacancies available; attendance is optional.

Fundamental school, compulsory to 7 to 14 year olds, extends over eight grades, with an annual minimum of 800 hours of activities. To enroll in the first grade, the student must be 7 years old, although entrance at an earlier age is allowed, depending on rules and regulations of each educational system.

Enrollment and attendance to fundamental education are allowed outside the appropriate age group. At 18 years of age, the student must attend supplementary education courses.

The fundamental education curriculum consists of a common core and a diversified part. The common core, as defined by the Federal Council of Education, is compulsory in the whole country, so as to ensure national unity, and it comprises: Portuguese, Social Studies, including History and Geography, Physics and Biology Science and Mathematics. The diversified part is defined by the needs of each educational system and of each school, taking into account regional and local characteristics, the schools' plans as well as individual differences and aptitudes of students.

Each school draws up its internal regulations, which must be approved by the Educational Council of the respective Educational System (state or federal).

Students are grouped into classes by grade, age and, in some cases, level of achievement. In rural areas, it is still common to find multigraded classes, with students at different schooling levels.

The assessment of student achievement is defined in the school's internal regulations and includes learning evaluation expressed in grades or Besides providing codes of assessment and attendance, the minimum requirement being 75% .

In rural areas, schools may organize their school year in relation to sowing and harvesting seasons.

The requirement for entering intermediate school is to have finished fundamental school or the equivalent supplementary schooling. Also in intermediate school, after the regular age limit has been reached (21 years of age), the student may take supplementary courses or examinations.

Intermediate schooling takes up 2,200 hours of effective school work, spread over at least three annual grades.

When the course includes professional training, it may last for four or five years, depending on the nature of course and the minimum content established by the Federal Educational Council for each area. Finishing intermediate education is one of the requirements for entering higher education. A number of jobs require specific intermediate level of schooling. Professional qualification can be specific for a certain occupation or basic for an economy sector.

Higher education is taught at isolated schools or universities. Basically, the former is directed at providing higher education qualification in one or two professions.

Besides providing higher education qualification, universities should promote all modes of research, as well as provide courses and other type of specialization activities to the community.

Higher education in Brazil is organized in two levels: undergraduate and graduate. The latter may be understood *lato sensu* (updating, specializing and further studies courses) or *stricto sensu* (master and doctorate courses).

Enrollment is done by subject, in a nonsequential system, with variable minimum or maximum duration, depending on the course.

Besides finishing intermediate schooling, the student who wishes to enter higher education at the undergraduate level must pass an classifying entrance examination, specific to each course.

At the graduate level, entrance requires having completed an undergraduate course and going through the selection process established by the institution. In graduate courses *stricto sensu*, the development of an individual paper is required a master's degree dissertation and a doctorate thesis the latter being expected to constitute an original contribution to the theme focused upon.

The basic structural elements of a full higher education curriculum are a minimum core, consisting of subjects and practices established by the Federal Council of Education, and a diversified content which may be defined by the institution.

b) Educational Programs

The Ministry of Education and Sports does not establish nationwide educational programs, as happens in other countries, but defines by law or by other legal instrument the guiding principles for the organization of such programs.

For fundamental education, the Federal Educational Council determines which subjects shall be compulsory for the national common core, defining their objectives and scope.

The Federal Council at each State and of the Federal District, lists the subjects contained in the diversified part of school curricula, for the area under its jurisdiction.

For higher education courses, the Federal Educational Council determines the minimum curriculum for each course, but not the programs.

c) Teacher Training and Qualification of Educational Specialists

Teacher and education specialists training comprises different modes which are implemented partially in intermediate schools and partially at the higher education level:

- Intermediate school training, or teacher school, have threeyear courses for training teachers to work with the first four grades of fundamental school.
- Intermediate school training, through 3 or 4 year courses plus an additional year of

- studies, to qualify teachers to work in the fifth and sixth grades of fundamental school, for preschool education and special education, among other specialization's;
- higher education training, in teacher undergraduate and specialized courses, for fundamental and intermediate schools, preschools, and special education, among others;
 - education training, at graduate level (*lato sensu*), aiming at qualifying teachers for undergraduate courses;
 - graduate training, *stricto sensu* (master's degree and doctorate), dedicated to the development of research, in the different fields of knowledge covered by undergraduate and graduate courses.

Besides the courses included in the initial training, there are programs usually held during the school vacation periods for the updating and recycling of practicing teachers and specialists. Also, teachers who do not have the required minimum qualification are also offered the opportunity for professional training.