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The National Education Plan



Brazil

Accelerating Action Towards Education for All
Amsterdam - The Netherlands, 10-11 April 2002

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In January 2001, the new National Education Plan was approved by the President of the Republic, Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Formulated through a participatory process involving the civil society, government and congress, the Plan sets guidelines, goals and priorities to be implemented by the end of this decade. Its premises and proposals are in tune with the Education for All goals of the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, in April, 2000.

According to the Plan, the three levels of government – federal, state and municipal – are committed to adopting measures to raise the population's level of schooling, improve the quality of instruction, reduce social and regional inequalities and democratize the management of public education by the end of the decade.

The approval of the National Education Plan has been a decisive step in guaranteeing education for all in Brazil. The country is currently designing plans at the municipal and the state levels to guarantee that the commitments and the goals of the National Education Plan be clearly achieved.

In a country the size of a continent, with 27 States and 5.561 municipalities, 170 million inhabitants and over 55 million students – including 36 million in basic education – there is an added challenge to this task.

Background

The National Education Plan is not the result of an isolated decision taken by certain authorities, groups of individuals, or political or educational forces mobilized just a few years ago, and then imposed on the whole nation. It has a long history. Placing it in this historical perspective allows one to understand its politico-educational dimension and to understand the importance of the next steps to be taken.

Ever since the 30's, there have been discussions about the need to design a broad, unified plan to promote the reorganization of formal education in the country. In the 60's, the first document of this nature was drawn up, followed by others, generally marked by the leadership of the Federal Administration in its design.

In 1988, in the throws of redemocratization and the intense social movements to reorganize the laws of the country and to establish a sound framework for a free, fair and democratic society, the new Brazilian Constitution included a broader provision for the development of the National Education Plan than any before.

Soon after, the debate began concerning new national guidelines and framework for education, an essential step in the development of a national education plan. More than eight years passed in the search of a consensus – from 1988 to 1996 – years filled with discussions and negotiations, until the new National Education Guidelines and Framework Law was approved.

Meanwhile, the World Conference on Education For All was held in Jomtien, Thailand (March 1990) under the leadership of UNESCO and co-sponsored by the

UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and the World Bank, as well as other international organizations. One hundred and fifty-five countries were represented and hundreds of organizations representing civil society organizations participated.

One of the practical outcomes of the Conference was the creation of the E-9 group: the countries with the highest illiteracy rates and deficits in compulsory schooling were to design a Ten-year Education for All Plan. Brazil was one of these countries.¹

Between 1993 and 1994, the Ministry of Education took the leading role in the creation of a Ten-year Education for All Plan, in ground-up processes, generating plans first at the municipal and state levels and then at the national level. Most of the education leaders of the time took part in the process, whether from state or municipal administrations, or government and non-government organizations.

The new National Education Guidelines and Framework Law implemented the mandates of the Jomtien Declaration, establishing the Education Decade in December 1997, and directed the federal government to have the National Education Plan legislated within a year. This meant new progress was to be made: the Plan had to be in harmony with the Education For All World Declaration and have a duration of one decade.

1997 was devoted to its formulation and was followed by three years – 1998, 1999 and 2000 - of legal procedures and discussions in the National Congress. Intense debates took place, amendments were presented, suggestions were made. The conclusions resulting from the World Education Forum held in April 2000 contributed to the definition of educational goals and priorities to be considered.

On January 9th 2001, the President of the Republic sanctioned the law instituting the National Education Plan, bringing the desires and efforts of over 60 years to fruition.

The Plan's formulation process

The National Education Plan is more than just another project emanating from the government. The national character of the Plan also presupposed the broad participation of all education stakeholders: professors/teachers, students, school principals and organizations representing the civil society.

The creation of the National Education Plan evolved through a two-stage democratic and participatory process:

- throughout 1997, an open and democratic consultative process was carried out with the different stakeholders directly involved with education issues.
- from 1998 to 2000, the Plan was the object of extensive debates in the National Congress. Various modifications and amendments were added to the original document, based on proposals from members of Congress and from the discussions arising from public hearings with education specialists and civil and government representatives.

Besides Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, China, Pakistan, India, Nigeria, Egypt and Bangladesh were part of the E-9.

All the recommendations of the Dakar conference were included in the Brazilian National Education Plan. The Brazilian Plan :

- was developed under the leadership of the Government, directly and systematically consulting civil society;
- specified the reforms concerning the six objectives of Education For All;
- included intermediate performance indicators; and
- promoted the coordination of all efforts in favor of human development, since it was included in the framework and the process of national development planning.

Basic characteristics

The National Plan was developed along three lines: education as a right, education as a tool of economic and social development and education as a factor of social inclusion. Education is seen as the most effective strategy to fight exclusion through the power that knowledge and acquired skills give an individual toward inclusion and social participation.

The Plan is a national plan, not simply a federal one. Its goals and objectives are the goals and objectives of the Brazilian nation. Every state, the Federal District and every municipality are constituent parts.

Also, it is a State plan, not a government plan. It will remain valid through three government terms, at the state and local levels as well as the national level. The entire society will be the heirs and beneficiaries of its goals, actions, and commitments. Even if there is a change of governments and political parties in power, the Plan will survive, because it responds to a higher legal and constitutional order over the period of a decade. Adjustments will be made throughout the 10-year period, if only in response to the distinctive ways different governments in power may approach certain issues. The essence of the plan, however, will remain the same.

Finally, the fact that it was approved by law, as determined by the Constitution, should insure its strength and guarantee its implementation. This is so on the one hand, because the legislative branch is a seat of democratic debate and decisions voted by representatives of the people; on the other hand, because the law requires it.

The law ratifying the Plan does not impose sanctions (it is in no way similar to a law with penalties), except those already sanctioned by the Constitution and by law. It is a law of commitment, the ethical option for an ideal of education for the country, a political and technical pact to achieve necessary goals.

Scope

Our National Plan is rather comprehensive, dealing with all levels and types of instruction. The Plan was structured into thematic chapters, each including diagnosis, goals, objectives and guidelines.

The Plan includes the following chapters:

- Early Childhood Education
- Primary and Lower Secondary Education, corresponding to the 8 years of compulsory schooling
- Upper Secondary Education, which includes the three years completing basic education;
- Higher Education
- Youth and Adult Education
- Distance Education and Educational Technology
- Technological Education and Vocational Training
- Special Education
- Indigenous Education
- Basic Education Teaching
- Funding and Management
- Follow-up and Evaluation

Objectives and priorities

The Brazilian Plan clearly establishes certain objectives and priorities to be pursued over the decade. Its general objectives are:

- A global raise in the level of schooling of the population
- An increase in the quality of instruction at all levels
- The reduction of social and regional discrepancies, concerning access and survival in public education
- The democratization of the management of public education

In accordance with the objectives cited above, the plan specifies five priorities:

- Guaranteeing access to and ensuring completion of compulsory primary and lower secondary schooling through eighth grade to all children aged 7 through 14;
- Guaranteeing compulsory primary and lower secondary education to those who did not have access to it at the proper age or to those who did not complete it, which includes eradicating adult illiteracy;
- Expanding schooling at the other levels;
- Enhancing the status of education professionals
- Developing an information and evaluation system at all levels of instruction and in all types of education.

Goals

The Brazilian Plan sets up goals to be met in deadlines determined for each level and type of instruction dealt with in the thematic chapters. The necessary steps to achieve those goals will guide the planning activity of the different governments throughout the decade. The main goals of each chapter are detailed in the annex.

Funding and management

One of the themes and goals of the National Education Plan is to guarantee the provision of financial support on the pluriannual plans over the next ten years for its implementation..

This guarantee is related to several basic guidelines. The first is the existence of constitutionally earmarked resources for the maintenance and the development of education. Brazil has an excellent legal system to ensure a regular flow of public funds for education.

The 1988 Constitution establishes that states and municipalities must invest at least 25% of their tax revenue in education. The Federal Administration must invest a minimum of 18% of its tax revenue, 30% of which must be earmarked for actions to eradicate illiteracy and maintain and develop primary and lower secondary education.

In addition, so far, compulsory primary and lower secondary education have received additional funds provided by corporations under the form of a compulsory social contribution called Education Salary, amounting to 2.5% of the pay-roll. One third of these contributions is allotted to a Federal fund – the FNDE (National Education Development Fund) – and two thirds make up similar funds, in the States where the contribution is collected.

The significant progress of the education indicators achieved in the 90's is linked to the level of available resources, which have allowed for a reasonable level of

investment in public education. Even though there are still pockets of resistance to social policy among the more hostile members of the economic technocracy, earmarked funds are essential to maintain education as a priority and ensure efficient management. Only the guarantee of a regular flow of funding can allow for effective educational planning.

Another important guideline concerns the management of resources for education by means of specific, accounting funds and designated accounts. The accounting funds allow for the effective earmarking of resources, which serve as the basis for planning rather than an *a posteriori* justification of expense accounts. They also allow for more effective social control and help avoid overspending on administrative activities and politically oriented injunctions.

This guideline is exemplified by the creation of the National Fund for Compulsory (Primary and Lower Secondary) Education Development and for Enhancing the Value of the Teaching Profession (FUNDEF) through a constitutional amendment approved in 1996.

FUNDEF is an accounting fund that automatically redistributes public expenditures earmarked for compulsory primary and lower secondary education, thus contributing to the elimination of the problems relating to the sharing or misapplication of educational resources. The resources of the Fund in each State are made up of 15% of all tax revenues and are redistributed between state and municipal administrations. Based on the amount available in each State, the amount per student/year is calculated and the funds are allocated to the state and municipal education systems, according to the number of students actually enrolled. In addition to ensuring equity in the distribution of funds in each State, the constitutional amendment that created the Fund also provides a mechanism to reduce inequalities by increasing the availability of funds to be earmarked for education. In the States where the expenditure per student/year is below the nationally defined sum, the Federal Administration provides the complement.

The basic premise is that funds should be allocated according to the needs and commitments of each system, expressed by the number of enrolled pupils. This is a means of stimulating universalization of access and coverage. The funds are directly applied in education activities: those who enroll more students receive a larger amount, giving a positive focus to the financing of education. Before, those who did not fulfill specific guidelines were punished. Now, those who do carry them out are rewarded.

In addition, FUNDEF is fundamental because it ensures the autonomous funding of the system. Although international loans are important for special projects, the routine funding of the system cannot depend solely on foreign resources.

In fact, currently the most important foreign resources to education received by our country have been directed toward correcting the most blatant inequities as well as toward programs for modernizing the educational infrastructure and the developing and implementing of evaluation and information systems. They are directed, therefore, to support efforts to improve the general quality of education.

The most important guideline in terms of the distribution and management of financial resources is transparency. Internal as well as external auditing agencies must be strengthened and management organizations in the school systems, such as the Follow-up and Social Control Councils of FUNDEF, must have their role broadened so as to monitor the distribution and application of all the funds earmarked for basic education.

Follow-up and evaluation

The legislation establishing the National Education Plan provides for its periodic assessment by the Federal Administration, together with the states, the Federal District, the municipalities and civil society organizations. The first assessment is scheduled for 2004.

The law also states there should be a permanent evaluation process based on data and quantitative and qualitative analyses provided by the evaluation system already carried out by the Ministry of Education at every level (School Census, National Basic Education Assessment System – SAEB, National Secondary Education Examination – ENEM, National Course Examination - Provão etc.).

The Federal legislative branch is also responsible for following-up the implementation of the National Education Plan. This proves once again that the Plan belongs to the Nation and requires the participation of all the powers of the Republic to guarantee its success.

State and municipal education plans

Finally, the Plan recommends the creation of state and municipal plans, tuned to its objectives, priorities, guidelines and goals. The plans from the three levels of government must make up a coherent and coordinated whole. Taking into account the federal character of the country, the combined efforts of the Federal Administration, all the states, and all the municipalities are essential to ensuring the achievement of the goals set out in the National Education Plan.

This process was started in 2001. State and municipal education plans are currently being drawn up in Brazil. Each state will have to establish its own plan, based on the national goals and its own specific situation. In turn, these state plans will serve as reference for the creation of municipal education plans. Just as the National Education Plan is established as federal law, the state and municipal plans must also be set up in the form of state and municipal laws.

The combined force of national, state and municipal education plans will guide educational policy making at all levels of government.

The progress Brazil has already achieved in the area of education in the past decade will be strengthened, making it possible to meet the goals set out in the Plan, to improve education at all levels, and to promote citizenship for every Brazilian.

Annex

Main Goals of the Brazilian National Education Plan

- **Early childhood and pre-school education**

- Expand coverage of early childhood and pre-school education over a five year period, to 30% of the population in the 0-3 age-group and 60% of children in the 4-6 age group (or 4 and 5 years old where primary education starts at the age of 6). By the end of the decade, attain the goal of 50% of the children aged 0 to 3 and 80 % of the children aged 4 and 5.
- Set up a National Professional Training Program for early childhood and pre-school teachers.
- Establish collaboration mechanisms between the education and health sectors and help maintain, expand, manage, monitor and evaluate institutions caring for children aged 0 to 3.
- Guarantee school meals for children enrolled in early childhood and pre-school public and accredited institutions through the financial contribution of the federal administration and the states.
- Introduce school councils and other forms of local community participation to improve the functioning of early childhood and pre-school institutions and expand educational opportunities and pedagogical resources.
- Progressively adopt full time schooling for children aged 0 to 6.
- Set out quality criteria for pre-school education services, using them as a reference for supervision, monitoring and evaluation, as well as an instrument for adopting measures to improve quality.

- **Primary and lower secondary education**

- Achieve universal coverage of access to primary and lower secondary education for all children, within five years, ensuring access and conditions of permanence in school to all children.
- Expand compulsory schooling to nine years, beginning at the age of 6, while universal access of children 7 to 14 is being achieved.
- Correct the school flow within five years, by reducing repetition and drop-out rates by means of learning acceleration and parallel catch-up programs throughout the course of study, thus ensuring effective learning.
- Link public expenditures for social programs with the actions of the federal administration, the states and the municipalities, so as to guarantee a school grant for low income families, among other goals.
- Maintain and strengthen the evaluation program of textbooks created by the Ministry of Education. An adequate approach to gender and ethnic issues and the elimination of discriminatory texts or those which reproduce stereotypes of women's roles, Afro-Brazilians and Indigenous Brazilians, should be among the criteria for evaluation.
- Gradually provide more textbooks to all pupils in the last four grades of the compulsory education cycle, giving priority to regions where access to written material is particularly insufficient.
- Provide school transport in rural zones when necessary, with financial assistance from the federal administration, the states and the municipalities, so as to guarantee school attendance for the pupils and access to the school for the teacher.
- With support from the federal administration, guarantee school meals and the required balance of calories and protein levels for each age group.

- Insure, within three years, that the weekly schedule of day courses include at least 20 hours of effective school work.
 - Extend, progressively, the school day, so as to expand full time schools which would function at least seven hours per day, with a sufficient number of teachers and employees.
 - Ensure the rising performance level of the pupils, through the implementation of a monitoring system, based on indicators from the National Basic Education Assessment System and the evaluation systems to be developed by the states and municipalities.
 - As part of the school census, encourage the municipalities to map out out-of-school children, per neighborhood, or residence district and/or the parents place of work, seeking to locate demand and universalize compulsory schooling.
- **Upper secondary education**
 - Enhance pupils' performance at the upper secondary education cycle, so as to reach satisfactory levels of performance defined and assessed by the National Basic Education Assessment System (SAEB), the National Secondary Education Examination (ENEM) and the state systems of evaluation to be implemented.
 - Reduce repetition and drop-out to 5% per year, so as to lower to 4 years the average time spent to graduate at this level.
 - Ensure, within five years, that all upper secondary teachers have a university graduate degree, offering training opportunities at this level to those without degrees.
 - Ensure that, within five years, all schools are equipped with libraries, telephones and photocopy machines.

- Ensure that 50% of schools own computers in five years and all of them in ten years, to modernize the administration and to help improve the quality of teaching and learning.
 - Adopt measures to expand day classes and maintain a sufficient number of night classes, for those students who are in the labor market.
 - Restructure the pedagogic and administrative organization of night classes within the next two years, in order to better adapt them to the needs of the student-worker, without a loss in the quality of instruction.
 - Create within one year an emergency teacher training program especially geared toward fields of science and mathematics.
- **Higher education**
 - By the end of the decade, provide higher education coverage to at least 30% of the 18-24 age group.
 - Create a broad interactive system of distance learning geared toward enlarging the number of course offerings for students enrolled in either regular and continuing education.
 - Institutionalize a broad system of internal and external evaluation including both the public and private sectors and promote the improvement of quality in teaching and learning, research and educational management.
 - Diversify higher education by enhancing the value and favoring non-university higher education institutions geared toward a target audience looking for specific professional training.
 - Encourage and strengthen the development of graduate studies and research in the university so as to double the number of qualified researchers in ten years.

- Encourage an annual increase of at least 5% in the number of Masters and PhDs granted through the national system of graduate studies.
 - Create policies that facilitate access to higher education by minorities who are the victims of discrimination, by encouraging remedial programs that help compensate for past academic failings and put students on an equal footing to succeed in the selection process at this level of education.
 - Ensure that extension courses are offered in higher education institutions to meet the continuing education needs of adults with or without university training, so as to bring about the necessary efforts toward compensating for a historical social and educational debt.
 - Encourage public institutions to adopt student financial assistance plans, such as work-study programs or other means of financial aid to help those who can demonstrate good academic performance, but are short of funds.
- **Youth and adult education**
 - Establish literacy programs for 10 million youth and adults within five years, and eradicate illiteracy by the end of the decade.
 - Ensure within the next five years that the first four grades of primary education is made available to 50% of the age-group 15 and above who have not attained this level of schooling.
 - By the end of the decade, ensure the coverage of courses equivalent to the last four grades of compulsory schooling to all the people in the age-group 15 and above who have completed the first four grades.
 - Establish a yearly overview and evaluation of the experiences of youth and adult literacy programs as a reference for stakeholders involved in the national effort to eradicate illiteracy.

- Establish policies facilitating partnerships for the use of unused spaces in the community, and make good use of the potential of community effort through civil society organizations for the education of youth and adults.
 - Urge states and municipalities to map-out the illiterate population through the school census, by neighborhood or residence district and/or workplace, in order to locate and instigate the demand and offer educational programs to illiterate youth and adults.
 - Whenever possible, link basic vocational education courses to primary and lower secondary education for youth and adults.
 - Double enrollment of youth and adults in upper secondary courses in five years and quadruple it in ten.
 - Encourage universities and NGOs to offer courses for senior citizens.
 - Coordinate education policy for youth and adults with policies concerning unemployment protection and job development.
- **Distance Education and Educational Technology**
 - Strengthen and support the National Educational Radio and Television System.
 - Promote non-stereotyped images of men and women on educational television including themes in its programming affirming gender equality and a useful approach to ethnic issues and the physically challenged.
 - Expand the coverage of distance learning courses in the education of youths and adults, especially in primary and lower secondary education, paying special attention to the rural population and to the potential of the radio channels.
 - Train at least 500,000 teachers within the next five years to know how to use to the fullest TV Escola and other networks with educational programming.

- Set up 2,000 education technology nerve centers in the next ten years to act as orientation centers for schools and administrative organizations interested in digitalized programming and educational videos.
 - Set up 500,000 computers in 30,000 public schools (primary and lower secondary education) within five years, so as to facilitate internet access.
 - Train 12,000 professors/teachers within ten years to be multipliers of educational technology
 - Train 150,000 teachers and 34,000 technicians in educational computer technology within five years, increasing annual training by 20%.
 - Equip all upper secondary schools and the primary and lower secondary schools with more than 100 pupils with computers and internet connections, fostering the establishment of a National Computer Education Network and the development of appropriate and quality educational software.
- **Technological education and vocational training**
 - Continuously revise and adjust vocational education to the demands of a national and regional development policy, in accordance with the demands of the labor market and in collaboration with businessmen and workers in the schools and at all levels of government.
 - Mobilize, link and expand the vocational training system so as to triple, every five years, the coverage of continuous vocational training for people in the productive age bracket who need to adjust and readjust to the new demands and perspectives of the labor market.
 - Establish partnerships between the federal, state and municipal systems and the private initiative to expand and encourage vocational training coverage.
 - Stimulate, in a continuous way, the use of public and private structures, not only for regular courses, but also for the training and retraining of workers, in order to introduce them in the labor market, and provide them with

competitiveness and productivity conditions, thus fostering a raise in their educational, technical and income levels.

- **Special education**

- Universalize, within the next ten years, the coverage of early childhood, pre-school education and primary and lower secondary education for pupils with special needs, through consortiums between municipalities, and whenever necessary, provide school transportation.
- Provide, within the next five years, textbooks that are recorded, in Braille or in big print for all the visually impaired pupils attending the primary and lower secondary cycles.
- Establish programs in order to equip basic education schools, within the next five years, and higher education institutions, within the next ten years, attending to deaf and visually impaired pupils and students, with sound amplification devices and other types of equipment facilitating the learning process.
- In partnership with NGOs, set up, within the next five years, and generalize within ten, the teaching of the Brazilian Sign Language to deaf and hearing impaired pupils, and whenever possible to relatives and school personnel, through an instructors training program.
- Ensure, throughout the decade, school transportation adjusted to the needs of pupils with locomotion difficulties.
- Establish collaboration mechanisms between the health, welfare and social aid sectors, so as to, within the next ten years, make prostheses available to all physically challenged students, as well as a special health care whenever the case may be.
- Include in all teacher-training curricula for upper secondary and higher education, specific disciplines for attending to students with special needs.

- Increase expenditures earmarked for special education, in order to reach, within the next ten years, the minimum amount equivalent to 5% of the funds earmarked for the maintenance and the development of education.

- **Indigenous education**

- Universalize, within the next ten years, the coverage of educational programs equivalent to the first initial grades of the primary education cycle, for indigenous communities, respecting their way of life, their visions of the world and their specific socio-linguistic situations.
- Gradually expand coverage of 5th to 8th grades of the compulsory education cycle to the indigenous population, either in their own schools or in regular classes in schools that are close-by, offering them additional assistance necessary for their adaptation, in order to insure them access to the complete primary and lower secondary education cycle.
- Create, within the next year, the official category “indigenous school” to insure the specificity of the intercultural and bilingual education model .
- Create, either in the Ministry of Education or in the state education agencies, programs devoted to the production and the publication of specific didactic and pedagogical material destined to indigenous groups, including books, videos, dictionaries, etc., designed and created by indigenous teachers in collaboration with their students and advisors.
- Within state education systems, establish and regulate the profession and the recognition of indigenous teaching, creating a special category of indigenous teachers, with their own specific career plans, special examinations and degrees suitable to the linguistic and cultural specificities of the indigenous society. Guarantee those teachers the same rights as the rest of the teaching community belonging to the same education system, with salaries corresponding to the level of their professional qualification.

- Provide extensive and correct information to the Brazilian population at large about indigenous societies and culture, as a means to strive against intolerance and prejudice towards them.
- **Basic education teaching**
 - Ensure the immediate implementation of career and salary plans for the teachers in all education systems, with the definition of a minimum wage and the guarantee of promotion through merit, according to the guidelines established by the National Council of Education.
 - Implement, progressively, a full time work day, done, whenever convenient, in only one school.
 - Allot between 20 to 25% of teachers' schedules to class preparation, assessments and pedagogical meetings.
 - Within the next five years, insure that pre-school and primary school teachers in activity, including in special education and youth and adult education have at least a specific secondary qualification,, adapted to the characteristics and the needs of the students' learning process.
 - Ensure, through a combined program from the federal administration, the states and the municipalities, that within the next ten years, 70% of pre-school teachers and primary and lower secondary education (in all categories) have a tertiary degree from qualified institutions.
 - Ensure that, within the next ten years, all upper secondary education teachers have a specific tertiary degree, obtained in an undergraduate course in their areas of knowledge.
 - Include in all curricula and training courses for education professionals, such specific issues as History, culture and knowledge of the art and religious expressions from the Afro-Brazilian, indigenous and rural worker communities and their contributions to Brazilian society.