

Education: Public or Private? (By Lisa Grever)

The education system in Brazil is full of inequality and discrepancy. The private and public schools in Brazil are consistently opposite through elementary to university levels. According to a Constitutional law, public elementary school in Brazil is mandatory and free for children ages 7-14. The Constitution also says that the education system should receive 25% of tax revenues to help with funding for the schools. Although the Brazilian education has changed and improved in the past few decades, it is still far from adequate. The public schools are not maintained, many children have to



work to help support their families and cannot attend school, the private schools are too expensive, and the teachers are not educated well in certain areas, but there are now close to 44 million children in the basic education programs in Brazil, and another 7.5 million in the higher or secondary education (Schwartzman).

Due to lack of funds from the government, the public schools are not in great condition. Not only are the supplies falling apart, but the school buildings are well. The teachers are not paid well, so they do not pursue degrees as high as possible and are not as qualified as they should be. This affects the classroom because the teacher is not as prepared and willing to teach the students.

However, the private schools are doing well. The more money a school has, the better the quality of education, teachers, and resources. Since the public education system in Brazil is not receiving the amount of money it should, middle class families are starting to send their children to the private schools in the area, which have more funds available.

Private schools in Brazil are much better at the elementary level, but they are much more expensive. They prepare students better for secondary school, or high school, and children get a better all around education. They are also more prepared to take the *vestibular*, which is the difficult university entrance exam to get in to public universities. The price is the main problem for families who take their children out of school to help work and support the family.



Once students have finished primary and secondary school, they still have to work hard to get into university. There is still the discrepancy between private and public schools at the university level. Although the private universities are providing better education, the public universities are still extremely competitive and free. The poorer students, who are usually lower achieving students, do not have the money to take a

cursinho, and therefore their test scores are not as good. They then go to the private universities, which are not as academically qualified and for which they have to pay.

The schools in Brazil are not as good as American schools but they are improving. At Parati, a school we visited, students would arrive after their normal school day to work on their basic educational skills such as math, reading and writing. This school provides extra support and care for a few students, but makes a difference in their education. The schools are also in much smaller locations and did not seem to have the huge playgrounds and fields we do here. They had small classrooms, with no air conditioning, and brick ceilings, but this was still providing these students with extra care.



Brazil's education system is improving, but it still lacking in areas. The public schools will remain free and compulsory for students aged 7-14, but many children perform in the streets to make money or go to work to help support the family, therefore not getting an education. If they do not succeed in elementary school, they are much more likely to not succeed in tertiary school or university. The private schools are more expensive at all levels, but their educational standings decrease from elementary to university level. However, the public educational system increases students' ability, as they get older. One of the main problems is funding, which is a huge problem in Brazil, but it is not the only problem within the education system. Despite the fact that the education system is far from satisfactory, it has improved in the past decade, and will continue to improve as the country advances.

Schwartzman, Simon. "The Challenges of Education in Brazil." University of Oxford Centre for Brazilian Studies Mar 2003. www.brazil.ox.ac.uk/Schwartzman38.pdf