

Fernand Braudel Institute of World Economics

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School Reform in São Paulo and Brazil

For a more just and productive society

A program of research, public debate and community action

Executive Summary

The Fernand Braudel Institute of World Economics seeks support to develop a two-year program of research, public debate and community action for public school reform in São Paulo and Brazil. Drawing from national and international experiences, we will work in consultation with public managers, teachers, politicians, business leaders, parents and students to develop policy proposals and implementation strategies capable of improving teaching and learning. We will address these issues:

Management and supervision: The new goals announced by the federal government and proposed by private groups cannot be achieved without improvements in the middle management of school systems and the quality of supervision. We will propose ways of strengthening middle-management and classroom supervision, drawing on international experience and successful Brazilian practice.

Statutes and rules: Produce an analysis of current legislation and regulations that block efforts to improve teaching, management and supervision, supporting proposals for legal and institutional reform.

School violence and disorder: Propose new systems needed to control disruptive and threatening behavior in public schools, especially in metropolitan areas. Members of New York's school system staff have offered their help in designing an intervention agenda for chronically violent public schools.

Parental involvement: Conduct community meetings and interviews with parents in the peripheral communities where we work, to discuss public school reform and document their views on school quality and accountability issues.

Building upon successful private-sector initiatives. Analyze and promote public debate on promising examples of private entrepreneurial action in public education reform, such as Pernambuco's school reform in Brazil. We will collaborate with *Todos pela Educacao*, a national education coalition of private businesses, to develop seminars, studies and technical meetings about implementation lessons from school reform experiences in other countries, with a special focus on middle-management and supervision.

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“There are two human inventions that may be considered more difficult than any others—the art of government and the art of education; and people still contend as to their very meaning”. Aristotle, Politics.

The Fernand Braudel Institute of World Economics seeks support to develop a two-year program of research, public debate and community action for public school reform in São Paulo and Brazil with tools and strategies dealing with these issues: **(1) management and supervision; (2) statutes and rules; (3) violence and disorder in the schools; (4) parental involvement; (5) private sector participation.** We would work in consultation with public managers, teachers, politicians, business leaders, parents and students to develop policy proposals and implementation strategies capable of improving school management and restructure incentives to improve the quality of basic education. A schedule of tasks to be carried out under this program follows the main text of this proposal.

Most Brazilians agree that public schools are failing to teach. Every year news media report the poor results of students in national and international exams. The System of Evaluation of Basic Instruction (Saeb) found that half of fourth-graders were unable to read a simple text, and that the results for secondary school pupils worsened when compared with previous years. Only 53% of Brazilian children manage to finish primary education. Brazil persistently comes last or next to last in international exams such as the OECD's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) among 15 year-olds in more than 41 rich and poor countries. While there is wide agreement on the failure of Brazil's public education, there is little discussion of how to improve performance.

School reform is a difficult and complex undertaking. Brazil is not alone in facing these issues. Many countries—the United States, Britain, Germany, Greece, Russia, Japan, Chile, Peru, Mexico, to name a few—are engaged in debates over failures in public education. A typical statement came from an 18-month study of California's failing schools by a commission at Stanford University: “The structural problems are so deep-seated that more funding and small, incremental interventions are unlikely to make a difference unless matched with commitment to wholesale reform.”²¹

Getting from here to there.

There is a new window of opportunity for school reform in Brazil. On March 15 Brazil's federal government announced a Plan for Development of Education (PDE) that includes (1) literacy testing for children from ages 6 to 8; (2) a national monthly minimum salary for

teachers of roughly \$380 (R\$800 *reais*); (3) continuous training of teachers by universities; (3) installation of computers in all schools; (4) better school transport; (5) expansion of the *Bolsa Família* anti-poverty program to include pupils up to age 17; (6) expanding the PROUNI program to provide full scholarships and loans to students at private universities; (7) financial incentives for high-performing school systems based on student achievement. It is the first time that federal funding will be tied to performance indicators.

In order to overcome what the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* called “the calamity of Brazilian education,”² special attention must be paid to implementation of these ambitious programs. There is a desperate need to expand and upgrade middle management. The critical areas are in supervision and management of classroom instruction, the use of testing and evaluation, dealing with disorder in the schools, and mobilizing private sector participation and support. We believe we are able to both monitor developments and propose policy solutions for these problems in collaboration with school authorities. In Brazil’s decentralized public school system, the role of the federal government, as in the United States, is to monitor performance, set standards and provide some extra funding under certain conditions. Because public education in Brazil is so decentralized, we would deal with issues mainly in São Paulo State, Brazil’s largest, Minas Gerais, and the Northeastern state of Pernambuco, where we have been working.

The Fernand Braudel Institute has gained valuable experience in dealing with problems of public education with our studies of school management and with our Reading Circles, reading and discussing classic literature with adolescents at 30 public schools in peripheral communities of Greater São Paulo. Also, over the past year we have been introducing Reading Circles among public high schools in 16 towns in Pernambuco as part of Procentro, a privately funded reform program.

Concerns about the quality of Brazilian education have become so widespread that in 2006 some wealthy Brazilians formed a coalition, *Todos pela Educação* (Everyone for Education), that set goals to be reached by 2022, the bicentenary of Brazil’s independence from Portugal. It has organized working groups with which the Fernand Braudel Institute of World Economics will collaborate, conducting studies, seminars and technical meetings about implementation lessons from international experiences of school reform, with a special focus on middle-management and classroom supervision strategies. The executive director of *Todos pela Educação*, Mozart Neves, is the former secretary of education for the state of Pernambuco, and has recently become a member of our Institute.

It is easy to agree on long-term goals. The difficulty lies in developing a viable strategy of implementation to solve specific problems. Our main task will be to work in consultation with stakeholders to develop specific proposals that can improve school management and restructure incentives for better teaching and learning. We would seek wide discussion of our proposals in our publications, in the media and in public forums. One of our aims is to help in finding a place in the political agenda for action on these issues.

The Culture of School Reform

School reform involves efforts to develop leadership, evaluation and restructure incentives. These efforts usually are controversial, requiring a certain level of public pressure and political consensus to carry them beyond the life of a single governmental administration or electoral cycle. In preparing for this program of work, we have benefited from wide reading, especially *Despite the Odds: The Contentious Politics of Education Reform* (2005) by Merilee Grindle, now director of the David Rockefeller Institute of Latin American Studies at Harvard University,

analyzing school reform efforts in Chile, Bolivia, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Mexico and the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais. Diane Ravitch's historical studies, *The Great School Wars: New York City, 1805-1973: A History of the Public Schools as Battlefield of Social Change* (1974) and *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms* (2000), show how intense controversy has characterized the evolution of public education in the United States, in contrast to the absence of meaningful debate in Brazil. To provide a framework for future debate in Brazil, we sponsored and published a major work, *História da Escola em São Paulo e no Brasil* (2005), by the distinguished historian **Maria Luiza Marcílio**, a member and research associate of our Institute. **Norman Gall**, executive director of the Braudel Institute and director of this program, produced a study of Peru's education reform of the 1970s, published in Spanish as a widely cited book in Peru, while a member of the American Universities Field Staff.³ We would be helped in this work by some distinguished members of our governing board: **Paulo Renato de Souza**, former Education Minister and now a Congressman; **Claúdia Costin**, former Minister of Administrative Reform and São Paulo State Secretary of Culture; **Maria Helena Guimarães de Castro**, former Vice Minister of Education; and **Claúdio Moura Castro**, former head of education policy for the Inter-American Development Bank. Also participating in this work will be **Marcos Mendes**, senior economic adviser to Brazil's Senate, a member and former researcher at our Institute who has produced careful studies of federal, state and municipal spending on education. Mendes also is the editor and main author of our recently published book, *Gasto Público Eficiente* (Efficient Public Spending).

Lessons from the New York School Reform

With both the difficulty and the need of improving public education in mind, Norman Gall and Patricia Guedes, our coordinator for education programs, spent five weeks in New York early in 2007 for intensive field research to analyze the courageous school reform being carried out in New York City over the last four years. We were accompanied for part of this field work by **Jane Wreford**, former head of school district inspection for the British Audit Commission, who spent a month with us in São Paulo in 2002, producing an essay on "Managing Public Education in Sao Paulo: Why so little teaching and learning?" in *Braudel Papers*, our newspaper of research and opinion published in English, Portuguese and Spanish.⁴ Our field research in New York was supported by *O Estado de São Paulo*, Brazil's leading newspaper, the United States Embassy, and the World Education and Development Fund of New York. As an initial product of this work, we have published a series of four Sunday articles in *O Estado de São Paulo* on the challenges of school reform in New York and Brazil.

Our work in New York provides us with a dynamic framework and relevant strategies for attacking common problems of scale, leadership and accountability. At the same time, differences between New York and Brazilian systems are too great for copying. New York City spends \$11,000 per pupil/year on its schools, while São Paulo spends \$800. States in the poorer Northeast spend roughly \$500. Brazilian schools can teach only in Portuguese, while New York must mobilize financial and human resources to teach English in 12 languages (including Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Korean, Urdu, Bengali and Arabic) for newly-arrived pupils who speak only their native tongue.⁵

Because of the scale, diversity and complexity of Brazil's problems of public education, our drafting of a program of school reform will concentrate initially on São Paulo, Brazil's economic hub that is a trend-setter on many social and political issues, while engaging in dialogue with politicians and educators in seminars, professional workshops and technical

planning meetings elsewhere (Pernambuco, Minas Gerais, Paraná) where we have connections with interested government officials, businessmen and journalists.

In São Paulo, the state and municipal governments run separate and overlapping school systems of gigantic size, with little communication between the two. São Paulo State has more people (41 million) than Argentina or California. The state government operates a school system embracing six million students. The populations of Greater New York (21 million) and Greater São Paulo (19 million) are roughly the same size, as are their core cities. The city of São Paulo, with 10 million people, operates a school system mainly in early and primary education, with 1,1 million students, roughly the size of New York 's school system. In Greater São Paulo, more than four million students attend class in state and municipal schools.

Both New York and São Paulo are emerging from prolonged periods of populist misgovernment and disorder that have impacted their schools. Both suffered from decades of political indifference and long-term effects of low standards for students, teachers and managers in poor neighborhoods. Deficiencies like these are common in big-city schools in the United States and Brazil.

Here are some aspects of the New York reforms that may be relevant to efforts to improve schooling in Brazil:

1. More authority and greater accountability for principals. After months of analysis by working groups and consultants, New York adopted a strategy akin to Britain's successful reform of the 1980s and 1990s, emphasizing autonomy for school principals and more intensive inspections for quality control.⁶ Principals in New York are getting more money for their schools and being empowered to hire teachers, make budget decisions, choose support services to improve their school and develop their teaching program. Rewards and sanctions are now data-driven, based on students' achievement on standard tests. Chronically failing schools have been closed and their principals removed. Under a "no excuses" policy, principals are warned that they may be fired if their schools fail to show progress. In Brazil, principals have little power or professional distinction. Their salaries are only slightly higher than classroom teachers, whom they have no power to hire or fire, and face formidable management challenges. They lack institutional support to deal with school safety, emotionally disturbed students, staff absenteeism and poor teaching. Teacher placement in Brazil is based on seniority and results from a highly theoretical civil service exam, without job interviews or demonstration classes. New York City has created a Leadership Academy, a fast-track management training program for aspiring principals, paying experienced principals as mentors and trainers. In São Paulo and the rest of Brazil, there is little management training for principals. They are not expected to visit classes, nor are held accountable for their students' failure to learn.

2. Increase classroom supervision and supply of high-quality teachers. As in São Paulo and other metropolitan areas in Brazil, public schools in New York's poor neighborhoods have been afflicted by adverse selection of teachers and low expectations for students. But over the past few years, New York raised teacher salaries by 43 % and cut class sizes by up to 8%. Automatic "social promotion" in grades 3, 5 and 7 was replaced by intensive testing and tutoring, including Saturday and summer classes.

New York's teachers' union agreed to participate in a new peer intervention program to help struggling teachers. Through a Teaching Fellows program the school system recruits professionals who want to teach, and through the national Teach for America program the

city recruits talented young university graduates for its hardest-to-staff schools. A new Lead Teacher program rewards excellent teachers with an additional \$10,000 a year to mentor and coach other teachers. A \$15,000 housing allowance is being offered to science teachers taking jobs in troubled schools. Brazilian public schools could benefit from similar schemes to attract high-quality professionals to high-need schools. Coaching by experienced teachers would provide high standards and the kind of in-school, hands-on classroom support for teachers, which school bureaucracies and teacher training programs have failed to deliver so far.

3. Testing and evaluation. The New York school reform is data-driven. We have been impressed by the intensity of testing and evaluation in the New York school system to improve upon dismal academic results. Schools are not only held accountable for overall student performance, but also by each individual student's progress. Brazil's federal government has just announced a plan to grade schools on a scale of 0 to 10. Previously, in the 1990s, Brazil built a national testing system departing from a very small base, under the direction of **Maria Helena Guimarães Castro**, later vice-minister of Education and now a member of the governing board of our Institute. Most states, including Sao Paulo, also began to run statewide exams. However, test results were not published at the level of the school, nor were results at the level of the individual child made available to parents. Only recently the Ministry of Education, with its *Prova Brasil*, published the results of national tests for each participating school. As of yet there is little monitoring of students' individual progress or the school environment.

4. Parental involvement: Many Brazilian officials and educators may believe that poor parents do not care about the quality of their children's schooling. Our experience in conducting Reading Circles in the periphery of Greater Sao Paulo, and in our recent survey of 1,100 families in four neighborhoods there, lead to a different conclusion.⁷ Public schools are viewed by poor parents as a way for their children to get better jobs. In our survey, only 47% of residents think that their public neighborhood schools have improved over the last ten to fifteen years. Fast growth in enrollments and rapid construction of public schools even in the poorest suburbs has not been enough for parents, who are increasingly concerned with quality issues.

We believe that parents form an important constituency for school reform. But it is difficult to involve poor parents in their children's public schools. In an attempt to address this challenge, Chancellor Joel Klein has created a position of deputy chancellor for parent involvement, and local parent coordinators. Brazil also needs initiatives to increase parents' participation.

5. Increase private sector involvement in public education. We believe that no education reform will prosper without active and sustained support by the private sector, not only with financial support but also with involvement in planning and leadership. Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein have forged a close bond with private donors. They have also attracted private support for charter schools and the hundreds of small theme-based schools that have been replacing large failing high schools.

In Brazil business and civic leaders recently have taken a stronger interest in overcoming the deficiencies of the public schools. Troubled public schools often resist the idea of welcoming a community partner, a basic requirement for all public schools in New York. A promising example of private entrepreneurial action in public education in Brazil is the

initiative of **Marcos Magalhães**, president of Philips do Brasil and a member of our Institute. **Magalhães** mobilized support from major companies to support Procentro, a network of 20 high-quality charter schools in 16 municipalities in his native state of Pernambuco. Procentro's principals hire their teachers based on demonstrated qualifications and classroom experience. Procentro students arrive at school at 7:30am and leave at 5pm, in contrast to the usual Brazilian school routine of three shifts of four hours each. Procentro's teachers earn more than other public school teachers, carry a full workload, receive class instruction training and are evaluated according to their students' achievement. Since most students come from failing public middle schools, they do intensive remedial math and Portuguese study in the first year. They develop fast. Procentro has an annual dropout rate of 2%, much lower than the 17% average for Pernambuco's regular state schools. The Braudel Institute is participating in this program with establishment of our Reading Circles in these schools. This model of private support for public education should spread to other Brazilian states, especially to poor neighborhoods of metropolitan areas.

Plan of Work

Political sustainability is a key dimension of all school reforms, making duration and timing basic considerations. Most education reforms need eight or more years to take root. How to stay the course through changes of parties and politicians is a basic issue in New York, São Paulo and elsewhere. In *Despite the Odds*, Grindle shows that Latin American reforms generally have not lasted beyond the life of a single administration. The Fernand Braudel Institute seeks to work with public officials and civic groups to develop analysis and policy recommendations that can sustain these efforts. We would generate specific proposals based on our field research, public debate and technical meetings and consultations. We would highlight best practices, offering data drawn from successful national and international experiences, to build capacity for public and civic leaders to succeed in implementing and sustaining improvement in the quality of public education. Here is how we plan to proceed.

Program activities

We hope to play a supportive role for innovation by public education authorities in their efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning. We will propose specific measures for school reform in São Paulo and Brazil, the fruit of research, consultations, community meetings, professional workshops, seminars, and publications, dealing with these issues:

1. Management and supervision. We would propose ways of improving the quality of classroom supervision, a basic need for improving the performance of large numbers of teachers. We would examine school systems that have been able to improve supervision of teachers and teaching methods in the early primary grades, to understand the endemic failure of pupils in reading and mathematics and propose ways of overcoming these difficulties. In São Paulo this problem gains greater urgency because the end of automatic promotion for 5th, 6th and 7th graders would produce increased repetition and thus aggravate shortages of classroom places. We will conduct seminars and recommendations for school officials on how the system can create incentives to improve results. We will analyze use being made of the new national standardized test, *Prova Brasil*, identifying the most effective ways for local governments to track and improve the performance of their individual schools, teachers' classroom instruction and pupils learning.

2. Statutes and rules. We would produce an analysis of current legislation and regulations, some of them embedded in Brazil's constitution, that block efforts to improve teaching and management. Our focus will be on problems of teachers' absenteeism, staff turnover and lack of classroom supervision. We would develop proposals for legal and institutional reform, and hold meetings with legislators interested in these issues, including officials of the Ministry of Education and members of the education caucus in Congress.

3. School violence and disorder. We would recommend new systems needed to control disruptive and threatening behavior in public schools, especially in metropolitan areas, where principals and teachers receive no support in dealing with school violence. We would propose development of well-known techniques of classroom management, unknown to teachers who need them most. When threatened or assaulted, they merely are told to file a complaint with the police. There are no alternative education provisions for persistently disruptive students. Our *Braudel Papers*, "A Classroom Diary" (No. 30/2002) by a 17-year-old student, Sandra da Luz Silva, reflects the environment of many of these schools. New York has made major investments in controlling comparable levels of disorder in its schools. The São Paulo State school system serves six million students, mainly adolescents, but employs no professional dedicated to problems of school safety. There is little technical or institutional support for teachers and principals in dealing with violence and disorder in a school's daily routine. With support from the U.S. consulate in São Paulo, we invited two security specialists from New York's school system in 2005 for seminars and workshops in the periphery of São Paulo and in Rio de Janeiro. They have offered their help in conducting seminars in Brazil and helping school officials to design an intervention agenda for underperforming, chronically violent public schools.

4. Parental involvement. We would conduct community meetings and interviews with parents in the peripheral communities where we work, to discuss public school reform and document parents' views on school quality and accountability issues. We are discussing with the private sector support for a survey in the periphery on parents' attitudes and views of their neighborhood public schools. This work will deepen our previous research with 1,100 families on the democratization of consumption and life aspirations in the periphery.

5. Dialogue with unions. Failure to engage in dialogue with unions has adversely affected previous school reforms in many countries. We would establish an on-going dialogue with teachers' and principals' unions to discuss controversial aspects of school reform such as career advancement, testing and evaluation, salaries and accountability. We believe that unions could become partners in school reform if the livelihood of their members is not threatened and if reform points the way to improved working conditions, salaries and opportunities for professional advancement. We also would consult directly with rank-and-file teachers, noting the separate interests of classroom teachers and union leaders who are on the public payroll but are freed of teaching responsibilities.

6. Building upon successful private-sector initiatives. We plan to examine Pernambuco's school reform in more detail and to promote discussion of these ideas through seminars and an issue of *Braudel Papers*. While in New York we met with the head of the KIPP (Knowledge Is Power) Foundation, which operates a national network of KIPP Academy

charter schools using teaching and character development methods with impressive academic results among struggling students in poor communities.⁸ They apply innovative and labor-intensive teaching strategies that make up for the lack of everyday intellectual and emotional stimuli lacking among poor students in their first decade of life. We visited a KIPP Academy in the South Bronx and discussed the possibility of bringing their expertise to Brazil. They would be willing to come for a series of initial technical meetings and professional workshops, in which we would discuss the creation of charter-like schools using these methods in the periphery of São Paulo and other Brazilian cities. They also invited prospective Brazilian sponsors to visit their network of schools in Houston.

Anticipated results and dissemination.

At the end of two years of research and public debate, we plan to publish our completed program of policy recommendations in printed form, on the Internet and in seminars that we and others would organize. By then, we will have published two *Brandel Papers* on school reform in Brazil, enriched by a historical perspective and by the lessons learned from the New York experience. We will also produce an issue of *Brandel Papers* on the privately sponsored reform in Pernambuco, analyzing its measured progress and the political difficulties it faced and overcame. These three *Brandel Papers* essays, together with three previous *Brandel Papers* on education, could be combined into a book. The Victor Civita Foundation that publishes *Nova Escola*, a widely read magazine for teachers and principals, has partnered with us to provide coverage of our work and our articles on school reform. We will discuss ideas in seminars and in meetings with relevant business and civic groups and leaders. We expect to use radio and television, since members of our staff often are interviewed by Brazilian and foreign media.

¹ Carolyn Marshall, "Report Says Public Schools in California Are 'Broken'," *The New York Times*. March 16, 2007.

² "Para sair do 'pior dos mundos'," editorial, *O Estado de São Paulo*. March 17, 2007/pA3.

³ Norman Gall, *La Reforma Educativa Peruana*, Lima: Mosca Azul Editores, 1976 (in Spanish). A study of Peru's educational expansion in this century and its political and economic implications. Original English version published in book form as *Peru's Education Reform. Part I: More Schools. Part II: Escape from Poverty. Part III: Dialogue of the Deaf. Part IV: "A Social Democracy of Full Participation"*, American Universities Field Staff Reports, 1974.

⁴ Jane Wreford, "Managing public education in Sao Paulo: Why so little teaching and learning?" *Brandel Papers* No.32/2003.

⁵ New York City Planning Department, *The Newest New Yorkers 2000* (2004).

⁶ Jane Wreford memo, January 23, 2007.

⁷ "Democratization of consumption: progress and aspirations in São Paulo's periphery" Nilson Vieira Oliveira and Patricia Mota Guedes. *Brandel Papers* N.38 2006

⁸ See Paul Tough, "What It Takes To Make a Student," *The New York Times Magazine*. November 26, 2006.