1. The Brazilian education system

Even before the COVID-19 crisis, the economic growth and reduced inequality which Brazil achieved over recent decades had stalled and gone into reverse. Against that background, the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened economic recession, and has hit hardest on those least able to cope with the downturn, exacerbating inequalities that still place Brazil among the more unequal countries globally. Education, the topic of this report, has played a big part in Brazil's progress, and has the potential to support the country's recovery. This report will examine the strategic challenges faced by Brazil in improving the *quality* and *equity* of education while also addressing the immediate demands flowing from the COVID-19 crisis. Chapter 1 sets the scene for this report, describing the national context, and the education system of Brazil and how it is organised and governed.

Introduction

During the first decade of the millennium, Brazil achieved remarkable social and economic development. However, as argued in the recent OECD economic review of Brazil, much of it is now at risk (OECD, 2020[1]). Even before the COVID-19 crisis, economic growth had stalled, and productivity levels lagged behind that of other emerging economies, undermining competitiveness. Social progress has stalled and, in some cases, gone into reverse. The COVID-19 outbreak has caused severe human suffering in Brazil, and plunged the economy into another, even deeper recession. The social and economic effects of the pandemic have hit the most vulnerable individuals and communities hardest, increasing the risks of poverty and exacerbating inequalities.

Education, the topic of this report, plays a big part in this story. Over recent decades, the expansion of education was an integral part of the country's progress, with higher enrolment rates at every level of education, a reduction of inequalities in access and falling rates of illiteracy. The younger generations entering the workforce are much better educated than previous generations, and this higher skilled workforce has played, and will continue to play a vital role in Brazil's economic development.

At the same time, education shares in the wider challenges now faced by Brazil. To support the country's recovery, the progress that has been achieved needs not only to be sustained, but also improved upon, with more focus on improving students' learning outcomes and reducing inequalities. Most urgently, many millions of students have had their education interrupted by school closures and will need well-planned support to facilitate their learning recovery and support their well-being. This calls for redoubled, well-resourced and sustained efforts to improve the *quality* and *equity* of education provision, alongside immediate measures to deal with the effects of the crisis. In addressing this challenge, Brazil can draw on its many demonstrated strengths and track record in innovative policy development, evident not only nationally, but also in the host of creative initiatives in states, municipalities, schools, and universities across the country.

This report, which aims to help in meeting this challenge, was prepared by the OECD, drawing on the extensive range of data available to the OECD, wide experience of other countries and how they have tackled challenges similar to those now faced by Brazil, and through consultation with experts. It draws on a wide range of indicators to compare Brazil's education system with those of other OECD and non-OECD countries, augmented by an examination of national data sources. This chapter sets the scene, describing the national context, the education system of Brazil and how it is organised and governed. Chapter 2 looks at participation, documenting its growth over time as well as how participation rates compare internationally. It also explores the issue of dropout and grade repetition. Chapter 3 draws on evidence from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and some national and regional studies to assess learning outcomes. Chapter 4 looks at financing and resource issues, including mechanisms such as the Basic Education Maintenance and Development Fund (*Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica*, FUNDEB), and other options for prioritising education funding. Chapter 5 examines school leaders, teachers, and teaching, drawing on rich evidence from PISA and the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). Chapter 6 considers the school climate, increasingly recognised as a key driver of education outcomes, exploring issues like the sense of school belonging, and the prevalence of school bullying. Chapter 7 draws the threads together to identify policy implications in the form of **ten steps to a stronger education system.**

Box 1.1. Education in Brazil: an international perspective – methodological approach

This report benchmarks the performance of Brazil's education system in relation to relevant comparator countries, including across the OECD and Latin American (LATAM) region, to form a perspective of how Brazil has progressed in relation to both international objectives (e.g. the Sustainable Development Goals) and national goals (e.g. the National Education Plan, *Plano Nacional de Educação*, PNE). Drawing on this analysis, this report will identify implications for education policy.

Scope

This report examines the entire education system, but places particular focus on Brazil's basic education system (in the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), this concerns ISCED 0 to ISCED 3).

Methodology

This report combines quantitative and qualitative investigation with the aim of presenting both comparable information and in-depth contextual evidence on policies and practices.

Evidence and data sources

This report is based on the most recently available evidence and data, drawing on international and national sources. This includes student assessment data from PISA and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Latin-American Laboratory for the Assessment of the Quality of Education (*Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación*, LLECE) assessments, as well as results from Brazil's national assessments. In addition, it is based on data collected through national and international surveys, such as TALIS. Data from the OECD Education at a Glance and UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) were also mined. When available, this report draws on trend data to monitor progress and trends in performance.

Qualitative data were collected through desk-based research and a limited number of interviews with experts, carried out in 2020.

Benchmark countries and jurisdictions

This report uses the OECD and LATAM averages as the main benchmarks. In addition, the OECD identified 13 benchmark countries with education systems that share key socio-economic and political characteristics with Brazil and/or carry relevant insights for Brazil. These countries and jurisdictions were chosen because they met one or more of the following criteria:

- Emerging Latin American economies: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay.
- Other major emerging countries and jurisdictions: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand, which make up ASEAN-4, as well as China and the Russian Federation.

The evidence from these countries was used selectively, and where relevant. Additional countries have been included as a reference when their experience and policies in specific areas were considered particularly informative for Brazil.

Notes: The countries included in the OECD and LATAM averages may vary according to the data available, and countries' participation in assessments, surveys, and other forms of data collection. For example, 37 OECD countries and 8 LATAM countries participated in PISA 2018, whereas only 31 OECD countries and 5 LATAM countries participated in TALIS 2018. When calculating averages, the threshold for the OECD average was established at a minimum of 20 countries, while the minimum threshold for the LATAM was set at 5 countries.

When calculating trend data for PISA and TALIS, OECD averages and LATAM averages were calculated across the different cycles based on the same list of countries across years. For PISA, different averages based on different numbers of OECD countries have been estimated (for instance, OECD average 37, OECD average 36a, OECD average 36b and OECD average 29) as many OECD countries did not take the earlier PISA assessments. However, the list of countries for each of those OECD averages remains the same across PISA cycles.
This report draws on results for China as a country, as well as from specific Chinese regions. Notably, PISA 2018 results do not reflect data for China as a country, but exclusively for specific regions. This report has drawn on PISA 2018 results for Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang (China) (hereafter "B-S-J-Z [China]").

National context

The population is now rapidly ageing

Brazil's 2019 population of 211 million people lives mostly (87%) in urban areas (World Bank, 2020[2]). The population is concentrated in the Southeast (42%) and Northeast (27%) regions (IBGE, 2020[3]). In recent decades, falling fertility rates, particularly among the most disadvantaged and least educated, alongside some decline in mortality rates, have caused sharp changes in the demographic profile – between 2010 and 2015, fertility rates had fallen to 1.7 per woman, well below the population replacement rate of 2.1 (UNFPA Brazil, 2018[4]). Consequently, Brazil's population is rapidly ageing. The share of the population aged over 65 will double from around 10% of the population in 2020 to 23% in 2050 (United Nations, 2019[5]). Among OECD countries, only Costa Rica[1] and Korea will age more rapidly (OECD, 2020[1]). At the same time, the number of children and young people in the country will continue to fall, with important implications for the education system and the labour market (United Nations, 2019[5]).

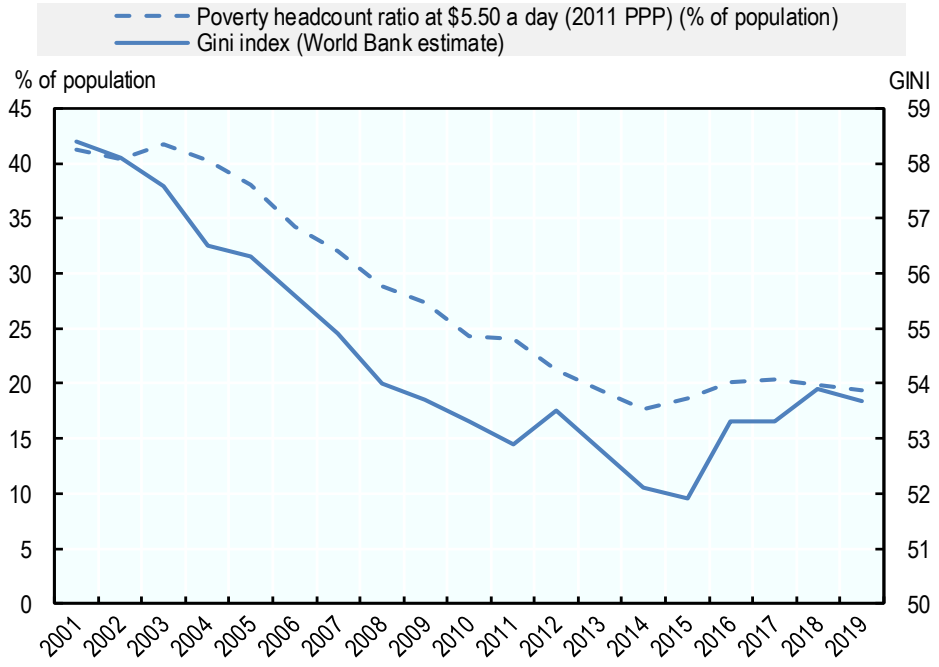
Economic growth has halted

In Brazil, economic growth has been supported for many years by favourable demographics and high commodity prices. Economic growth, alongside targeted policies, improved living standards, lifting more than 29 million people out of poverty between 2003 and 2014, reducing child mortality by 73% between 1990 and 2011, and expanding access to basic education (World Bank, 2020[6]; UN, 2012[7]; Ipea, 2014[8]). However, around 2015, the country entered a deep recession (OECD, 2018[9]; World Bank, 2020[6]; OECD, 2020[1]). In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic also reversed a gradual recovery from the last downturn and plunged the economy into another, even deeper recession, with a GDP drop of 4% (IBGE, n.d.[10]). Unemployment increased from 6.6% in 2014 to 12% in 2019 (World Bank, 2020[2]), and is expected to reach 15% in 2021[2] (OECD, 2020[1]). High levels of public spending and a large government debt burden present major challenges of fiscal sustainability (OECD, 2020[1])**.** Looking to the future, the rapid ageing of the population and the moderate and unstable price of commodities are forecasted to slow the economy's potential growth (Bogmans and Restrepo, 2019[11]; OECD, 2020[1]), putting Brazil's economic development model into question.

Inequality remains large, and COVID-19 might exacerbate gaps

By some measures Brazil has the second highest level of inequality among OECD and partner countries (OECD, 2018[12]). Currently, the bottom 40% of income earners receive only 10% of disposable income, while the top 10% pocket more than four times as much (OECD, 2020[1]). The recent economic recessions have reverted much of the progress in social mobility and equality that took place in the 2000s: 20% of the population was living under the poverty line[3] in 2018, up from 18% in 2014 (see Figure 1.1) (World Bank, 2020[2]; Medeiros, 2016[13]; OECD, 2020[1]).

Figure 1.1. Percentage of the population under the poverty line and inequality levels as measured by the Gini index, 2001-2019



Note: The Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income (or, in some cases, consumption expenditure) among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. The Gini index measures the area between the Lorenz curve and the hypothetical line of absolute equality, expressed as a percentage of the maximum area under the line. A Gini index of zero represents perfect equality and 100, perfect inequality.
Source: Adapted from (OECD, 2020[1]), *OECD Economic Surveys: Brazil 2020,* https://doi.org/10.1787/250240ad-en.

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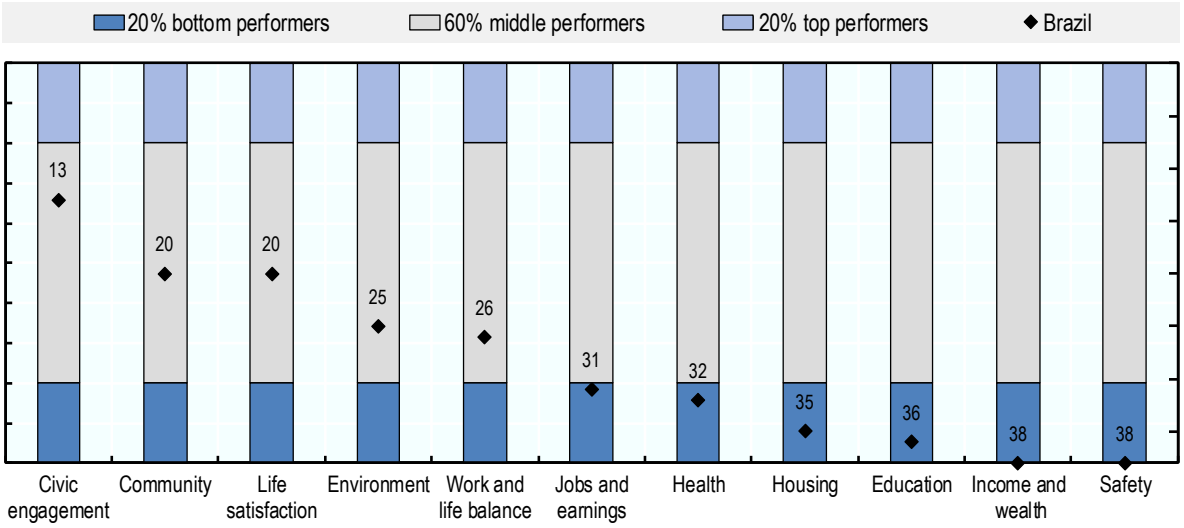
Other measures of social and economic development reveal challenges

Other measures of national development also highlight challenges. Brazil's ranking is low on the OECD Better Life Index, which compares well-being across countries according to indicators of safety, income, education, health and housing (see Figure 1.2) (OECD, 2020[1]). Brazil ranked last in the index for safety, partly because of its very high homicide rates (UNDP, n.d.[14]). In health and housing, Brazil also lags, with only two-thirds (68%) of the population having access to basic sanitation, and worse figures in the North and Northeast. Some households still lack access to water (IBGE, 2020[3]).

Figure 1.2. OECD Better Life Index and its well-being indicators



Note: The numbers indicate Brazil's ranking among the 38 countries included in the Index.
Source: Adapted from (OECD, 2020[1]), *OECD Economic Surveys: Brazil 2020,* https://doi.org/10.1787/250240ad-en.

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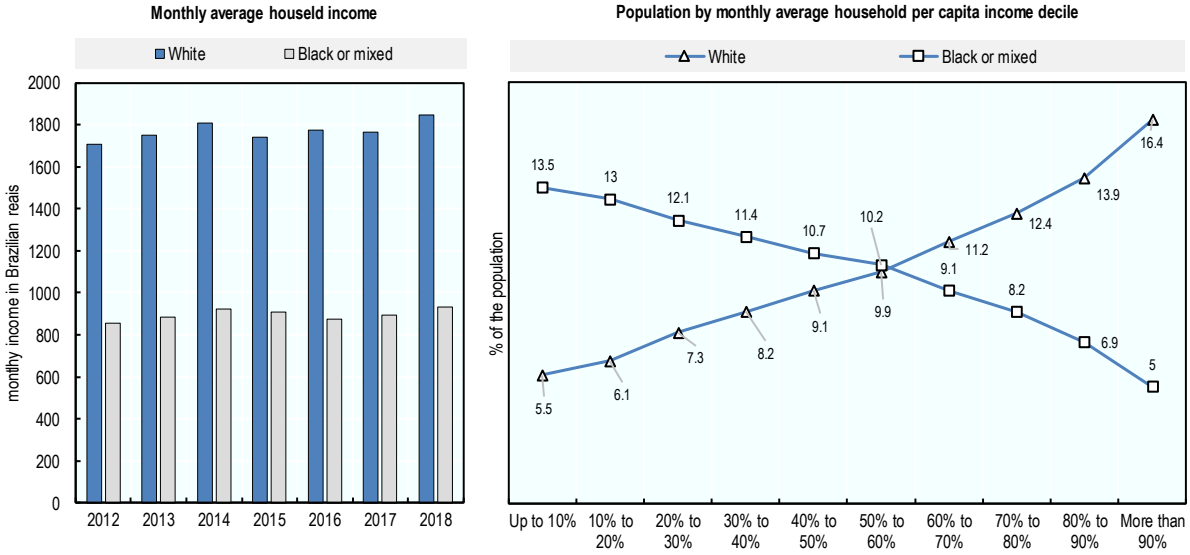
Brazil's great diversity goes together with large inequalities

Brazil's ethnically, culturally, and socio-economically diverse population (see Box 1.2) is marked by deep-rooted inequalities which are often intersectional. Vulnerable groups include racial and sexual minorities, indigenous populations, people living in the *favelas*, riverside populations and others. For example, black and mixed individuals represent more than half of the population (56%) (IBGE, 2020[3]), and are disproportionally represented among the most disadvantaged. In 2018, black or mixed individuals made up over 75% of the poorest decile of the population (IBGE, 2019[15]), and recent years show little sign of any narrowing of the race-based income gap (see Figure 1.3). The black and mixed population lags behind whites on a wide range of indicators, including representation in politics (IBGE, 2019[15]). They constitute only 24% and 30% of federal and state congressmen, respectively – an issue related to a lack of support and incentives (IBGE, 2019[15]). Geographic disparities can also be large: for example, average per-capita income in Maranhão, in the Northeast, is less than half of that for São Paulo, in the Southeast (see Figure 1.4) (OECD, 2020[1]).

Figure 1.3. Income disparities by race

Trend in monthly average household income in Brazilian reais (BRL) between 2012-2018, by race (figure on the left); distribution of population by race and monthly average household per-capita income, 2018 (on the right)



Source: Adapted from (IBGE, 2019[16]), *Síntese de Indicadores Sociais: Uma análise das condições de vida da população brasileira 2019 [Synthesis of Social Indicators: An analysis of the living conditions of the Brazilian population 2019]*, https://biblioteca.ibge.gov.br/visualizacao/livros/liv101678.pdf (accessed on 23 April 2020).

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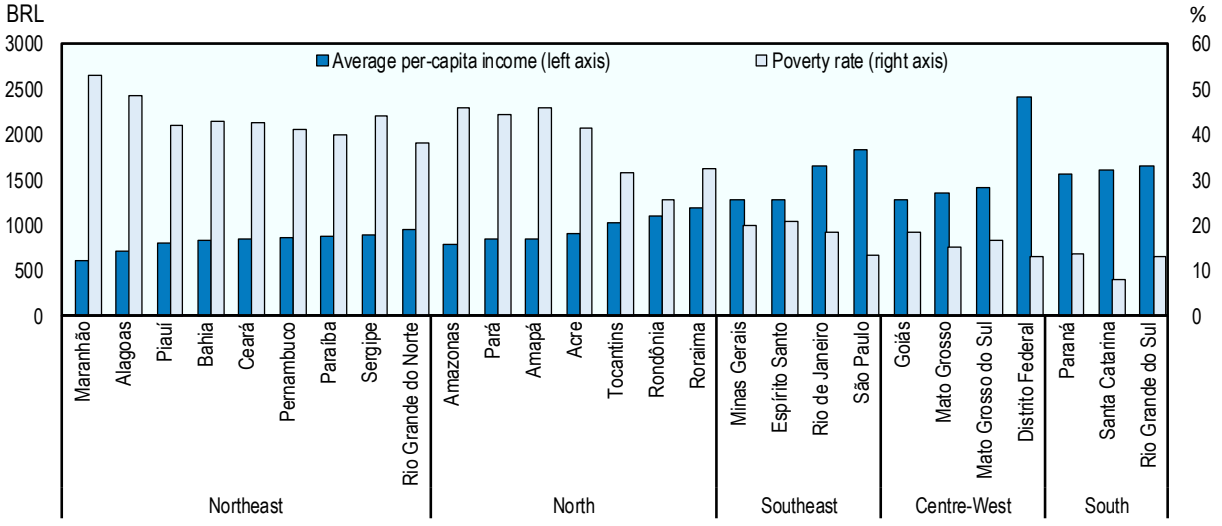
Figure 1.4. Income disparities, by state and region, 2018

Average per-capita income in BRL and poverty rates by state and region, 2018



Source: Adapted from (OECD, 2020[1]), *OECD Economic Surveys: Brazil 2020*, https://doi.org/10.1787/250240ad-en.

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Box 1.2. Institutional definition of race in Brazil

The National Institution of Statistics in Brazil (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*, IBGE) uses five different categories under which Brazilians can identify themselves:

- Whites *(População branca),* those who identify as descended from European immigrants, although in practice many have more diverse ancestry; 47% of the population identified themselves under this heading in the 2010 census.
- Mixed or Pardo Brazilians *(População parda)*, those who are descended from many different racial groups, including those of African, Indigenous and European origin. 43% of the population identified themselves under this heading in the 2010 census.
- Blacks *(População preta)* identifying themselves as being of mainly African origin – descended from African slaves. 8% of the population identified themselves under this heading in the 2010 census.
- Asian Brazilians *(População amarela).* 1.1% of the population identified themselves under this category.
- Indigenous people *(População indígena)*, from diverse tribes. 0.4% identified themselves under this heading.

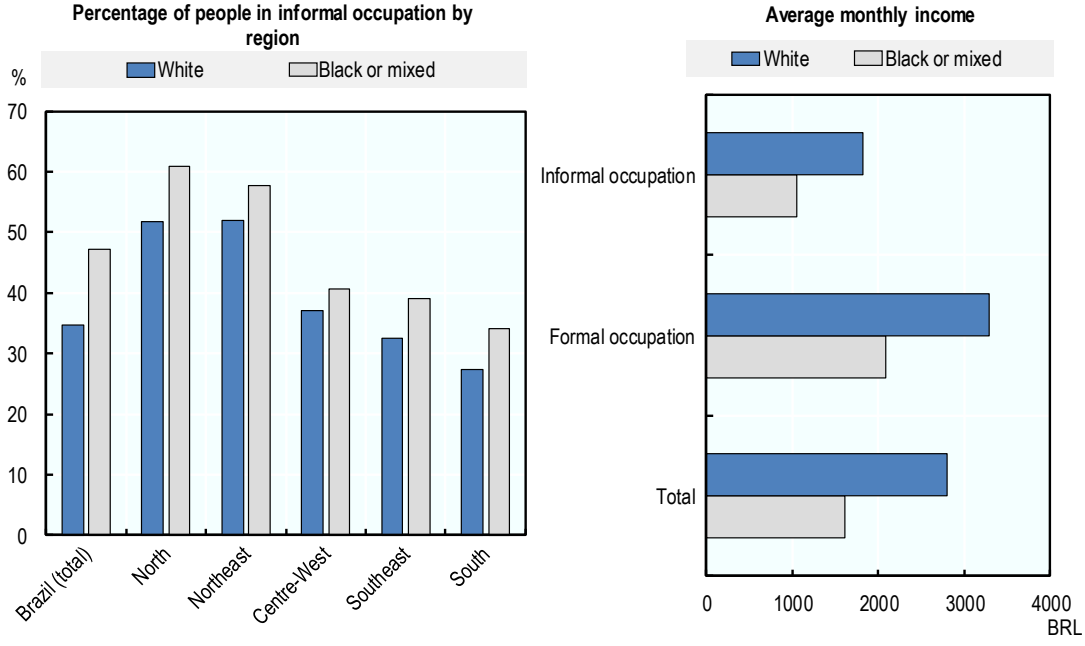
Source: (IBGE, n.d.[17]), *Population Census (2010)*, https://www.ibge.gov.br/en/statistics/social/labor/18391-2010-population-census.html?=&t=o-que-e (accessed on 14 September 2020).

The many workers in the informal economy are especially vulnerable

In 2019, 41% of the workforce was working in the informal economy (IBGE, 2020[18]). These informal workers commonly have less job security, and poverty levels are four times higher among these workers than the national average (OECD, 2020[1]). Women, black and mixed individuals, and those with lower educational attainment are more likely to be informally employed (see Figure 1.5) (IBGE, 2019[16]).

Figure 1.5. Levels of informality, by region and race, 2018

Percentage of people working in the informal economy, by region and race (left figure) and average monthly income of workers in BRL, by race (right figure), in 2018



Note: For the monthly income, data refers to people 14-years-old and older.
Source: (IBGE, 2019[15]), *Desigualdades Sociais por Cor ou Raça no Brasil [Social Inequalities by Colour or Race in Brazil]*, https://biblioteca.ibge.gov.br/visualizacao/livros/liv101681_informativo.pdf (accessed on 5 May 2020).

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Current setbacks in the fight against corruption have increased the population's mistrust in the government

Around 90% of Brazilians think that corruption is an important issue and more than half of those (54%) think that it has worsened recently (Transparency International, 2019[19]). National and international reports signal setbacks in the fight against corruption in recent years (Transparency International, 2019[20]; OECD, 2019[21]; Transparência Internacional, 2021[22]; Transparência Internacional, n.d.[23]), including the watering down of the country's anti-corruption legislation, growing political interference in law-enforcement institutions and lack of communication between government and civil society organisations and increasing press harassment (Transparency International, 2019[20]). Corruption is also a problem in the education sphere. National and international evidence shows that mismanagement of public spending on education damages the quality of teaching and learning. In Brazil, around 60% of corruption cases are linked to the education and health sectors (Ferraz, Finan and Moreira, 2012[24]) (see Chapter 4).

Coupled with the perception of lack of representation in politics and the sometimes questionable electoral mechanisms, much of the population does not trust government, its bodies and representatives (Transparency International, 2019[19]). According to a national public survey carried out in 2017, 78% of citizens did not trust politicians or their political parties (FGV/DAPP, 2017[25]).

The structure of the education system

Education is a social right in Brazil and the country's Federal Constitution guarantees access to free public education at all levels. Brazil divides its education system into basic and higher education levels. The basic level includes: early childhood education (ISCED 0, and in Portuguese, *ensino infantil*); primary and lower secondary education (ISCED 1 and 2, also known in the country as elementary education, and in Portuguese*, ensino fundamental*); and upper secondary education (ISCED 3, and in Portuguese, *ensino médio*) (see Figure 1.6). Compulsory education starts at the age of four, in pre-school education, and lasts 14 years, up until the end of upper secondary education.

Figure 1.6. Structure of Brazil's education system

<table>
<tr><th>ISCED 2011</th><th>Starting age</th><th>Administrative unit (primarily responsibility)</th><th>Grade/Year</th><th colspan="3">Education programme</th></tr>
<tr><td>8</td><td>23-26</td><td rowspan="4">Federal government</td><td rowspan="4">Higher education</td><td colspan="2">Doctoral degree (Doutorado)</td><td rowspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>7</td><td>22</td><td>Academic Master's degree, stricto sensu (Mestrado, stricto sensu)</td><td>Professional Master's degree, stricto sensu (Mestrado Profissional, stricto sensu)</td><td>Specific Professional diploma, lato sensu (Curso de especialização, lato sensu)</td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td><td>18</td><td>Bachelor's degree (Bacharelado)</td><td>Licentiate's degree (Licenciatura)</td><td>Technological degree (Graduação Tecnológica)</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>18</td><td>Federal government and states</td><td></td><td colspan="2"></td><td>Technical course (curso técnico de nível médio subsequente)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">3</td><td rowspan="3">15</td><td rowspan="3">States</td><td>Grade 3</td><td colspan="3" rowspan="3">Upper secondary education (ensino médio)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Grade 2</td></tr>
<tr><td>Grade 1</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">2</td><td rowspan="4">11</td><td rowspan="4">Municipalities and states</td><td>Year 9</td><td colspan="3" rowspan="4">Lower secondary (anos finais do ensino fundamental)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 8</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 7</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 6</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">1</td><td rowspan="5">6</td><td rowspan="5">Municipalities</td><td>Year 5</td><td colspan="3" rowspan="5">Primary (anos iniciais do ensino fundamental)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 4</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 3</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 2</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 1</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">0</td><td>4</td><td rowspan="2">Municipalities</td><td></td><td colspan="3">Pre-school (pré-escola)</td></tr>
<tr><td>0</td><td></td><td colspan="3">Early childhood educational development (creches)</td></tr>
</table>

Notes: In Brazil, the different levels which compose elementary education are referenced as Years (i.e. Year 1 of primary education) while Grade is used for upper secondary education (i.e. Grade 2 of upper secondary education).
Education programmes in blue refer to those which are part of mandatory education. Education programmes (in bold) are recognised exit points of the education system.
Source: (Presidência da República, 1996[26]), *Lei Nº 9.394, de 20 de Dezembro de 1996 [Law No. 9.394 of December 20, 1996]*, http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/l9394.htm, (accessed on 6 August 2020); (OECD, 2015[27]), *Education Policy Outlook: Brazil*, http://www.oecd.org/education/Brazil-country-profile.pdf (accessed on 6 August 2020).

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Governance

Governance structure

Multilevel governance in Brazil's federal system

Brazil has a three-level federal system of government, including: the federal government, and federative entities (including 26 states, the Federal District and 5 569 municipalities). Responsibility for education is shared among the three levels (see Figure 1.7). States and municipalities have direct responsibility for the delivery of education for ISCED 0 to ISCED 3, with municipalities primarily delivering early childhood education and care (ECEC), primary and lower secondary education, and states primarily delivering lower and upper secondary education. The federal government is primarily responsible for higher education (see Figure 1.6).

In Brazil's decentralised education system, federal, state and municipal entities are on equal footing, meaning that local governments are not subordinate to the federal government. Nevertheless, reports suggest that the federal government has been predominantly anchored in a vertical and centralised mode of operation (CNE, 2012[28]). According to the OECD report *Auditing Decentralised Policies in Brazil*, top down, centralised policies are unable to account for the heterogeneity of Brazilian cities and states, which is critical as the country shifts its focus from access to education to the quality of education (OECD, 2020[29]).

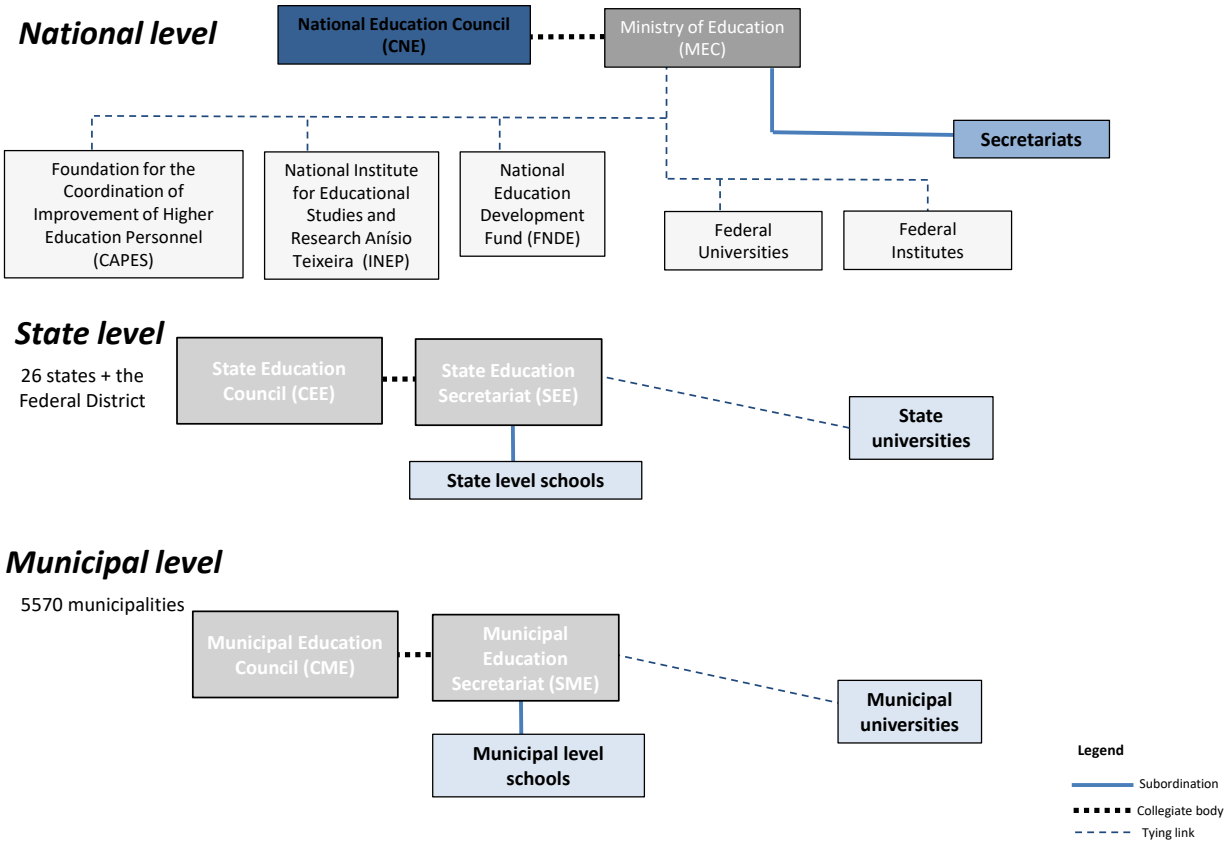
Education responsibilities of the federal government

The federal government's education functions include: setting national standards and overall objectives for the country (e.g. the PNE); directly managing institutions including the federal universities and vocational federal schools; co-ordinating education policies and practices across the different levels of government; and providing technical and financial assistance to states and municipalities. The Ministry of Education (*Ministério da Educação*, MEC) is also responsible for regulating all education levels in Brazil, from early childhood to higher education. MEC evaluates the education system through the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (*Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira*, INEP), which focuses primarily on pre-tertiary education, and the Foundation for the Co-ordination of Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (*Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior*, CAPES), which focuses on higher education. In collaboration with state and municipal governments, MEC determines curricular guidelines (i.e. common competencies and subjects) to be taught at schools. Three key associated bodies are:

- The National Council of Education (*Conselho Nacional de Educação*, CNE). It is a collegiate body to the Ministry of Education that is responsible for advising and monitoring the design and implementation of national education policy. It ensures the participation of the Brazilian society in education policy development and improvement.
- INEP, which is a semi-autonomous agency responsible for carrying out assessments and exams to evaluate Brazil's basic and higher education and establishing quality performance indicators. It is responsible, among other matters, for: the main national-level assessment during pre-tertiary education (*Sistema de Avaliação da Educação Básica*, SAEB) and in tertiary education (*Exame Nacional de Desempenho dos Estudantes*, ENADE); the main national indicator to measure the quality of pre-tertiary education (*Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica*, IDEB) (see Chapter 3); and the main exam granting access to higher education in the country (*Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio*, ENEM). It also collects and disseminates reference information and statistics on the education system in Brazil.

- The National Education Development Fund (*Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação*, FNDE), which is a semi-autonomous body responsible for resource allocation and providing technical support to states and municipalities.

Figure 1.7. Organigram of the main bodies in the education sector at the national, state and municipal level



Note: Brazil has 27 federal units, including 26 states and the Federal District. Not all municipalities have their own education network. Those that do not follow norms and guidelines established by their state councils. Municipalities are primarily responsible for early childhood and primary education, while states are responsible for lower and upper secondary education.
Source: (Presidência da República, 2020[30]), Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil de 1988 [1988 Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil], http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/constituicao/constituicao.htm (accessed on 19 August 2020); (Presidência da República, 1996[26]), *Lei Nº 9.394, de 20 de Dezembro de 1996 [Law No. 9.394 of December 20, 1996]*, http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/l9394.htm, (accessed on 6 August 2020); (MEC, 2020[31]), *Organograma [Organizational Chart]*, https://www.gov.br/mec/pt-br/estrutura-organizacional/organograma (accessed on 6 August 2020).

Governance at the state level and municipal level

State and municipal governments are responsible for their respective education networks. These responsibilities are exercised through State Education Secretariats and Councils (*Secretaria de Estado da Educação*, SEEs and *Conselho Estadual de Educação*, CEEs, respectively) and Municipal Education Secretariats and Councils (*Secretaria Municipal de Educação*, SMEs and *Conselho Municipal de Educação*, CMEs, respectively). Table 1.1 presents a full description of some of their main responsibilities.

Table 1.1. Main responsibilities of administrative bodies at the state and municipal level

	State Education Secretariats	State Education Councils	Municipal Education Secretariats	Municipal Education Councils
Defining curriculum content and pedagogy	Elaborate the state curriculum to guide state, municipal and private schools at pre-tertiary education levels and state education plans in alignment with national guidelines. Run the state-level school network.	Validate the pedagogical project, the disciplines offered, the workload and the teaching staff of the state schools. Approve the state curriculum.	Elaborate and implement the municipal curriculum and municipal education plans in alignment with national and state guidelines. Run the municipal-level school network.	Approve the basic curriculum for the municipal education network.
Management issues	Exercise a redistributive role in relation to their schools. Manage school meals, transportation and school calendar.		Exercise a redistributive role in relation to their schools. Manage school meals, transportation and school calendar. Provide transportation for students in the municipal school network.	
Regulation		Supervise state educational institutions. Authorise the operation of state public and private schools.		Draw up rules for municipalities in accordance with federal and / or state laws Supervise municipal educational institutions Authorise the operation of municipal public and private schools
Accountability and Monitoring	Ensure that educational quality standards set by federal agencies and the national common curriculum are met.	Monitor the implementation of state education plans.	Ensure that educational quality standards set by federal agencies and the national common curriculum are met.	Monitor the implementation of public policies and the educational results of the municipal education system
Human Resources and Development	Develop actions to promote interaction between schools, parents, students and communities, such as “pedagogical meetings”. Create and manage cultural and sports programmes for the school community Hold admission processes for education civil servants.		Develop actions to promote interaction between schools, parents, students and communities, such as “pedagogical meetings”. Create and manage cultural and sports programmes for the school community. Hold admission processes for education civil servants.	

The National Council of Education Secretariats (*Conselho Nacional de Secretários de Educação*, CONSED) at the state level and the National Union of Municipal Education Managers (*Education União Nacional dos Dirigentes Municipais de* Educação, UNDIME) at the municipal level, promote and support the interaction between local stakeholders and between them and the federal government. Nevertheless, horizontal co-ordination, such as between municipalities, is reported to be low (Abrucio, 2017[32]; OECD, 2020[29]).

Overlaps of responsibility and a lack of co-ordination mechanism

Brazil has a complex governance structure, reflecting in part its size and diversity. It also faces some distinct challenges. It is unusual for two separate levels of government – states and municipalities – to directly run schools at the same education level. Normally that responsibility is given to one or other level of government on grounds of clarity and efficiency. In addition, Brazil still lacks a national system that clearly outlines and harmonises the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of government, laying out the ways in which they should work together to deliver education policy (SASE/MEC, 2014[33]) (see Box 1.3). While CONSED and UNDIME play a role in articulating state and municipal stakeholders, respectively, they are not formal government entities. Moreover, despite the existence of some participatory spheres, such as deliberative councils, (see Table 3.4 in (OECD, 2020[29]) there are no official regular arrangements or body to facilitate the co-ordination of *all* the different levels of government with actual decision-making powers. This lack of co-ordination often leads to overlap or duplication of work, inefficiencies, and gaps in education provision (SASE/MEC, 2015[34]; OECD, 2020[29]).

Box 1.3. Towards a National Education System

The creation of a National Education System (*Sistema Nacional de Educação*, SNE) has been in the public debate for some years now. It bears the promise of fulfilling the principle of the "collaboration regime" (Dourado, 2013[35]) which has not yet been regulated. The documents for the 2014 National Education Conference (*Conferência Nacional da Educação* – CONAE), elaborated by the National Education Forum (*Fórum Nacional de Educação,* FNE), had argued that its creation would contribute to achieving the following objectives:

- To promote common educational guidelines throughout the national territory, with the perspective of overcoming regional inequalities and promoting the right to quality education.
- To define and guarantee common educational purposes, guidelines and strategies, without prejudice to the specificities of each system.
- To reinforce the federal government's role in promoting articulation, standardisation, co-ordination and regulation of public and private national education.

Later in 2014, with the Law of the National Education Plan (Law nº 13.005/2014), the creation of such a system became mandatory. Article 13 of the Law states that:

> *Art. 13. The public power must establish, in a specific law, two years after the publication of this Law, the National Education System, responsible for the articulation between the education systems, in a collaborative regime, for the effectiveness of the guidelines, goals and strategies of the National Education Plan.*

Given that the National Education System would have to be created by a specific national law, advocacy groups and non-governmental organisations, together with congressmen, congresswomen and senators whose platform of work is education, have been promoting this agenda in the National Congress. The Complementary Law Project nº 25, which foresees the creation of the SNE, was proposed in February 2019 at the Chamber of Deputies (the lower chamber of Brazil's National Congress). However, it awaits appreciation by the Education Commission since March of that same year. Another Law Project enacting the SNE was proposed in 2019, this time at the Federal Senate. The Complementary Law Project nº 235, proposed in October 2019, awaits appreciation by the Education Commission since December of that year. The non-governmental organisation Todos pela Educação and the National Campaign for the Right to Education argue that a specific law of the National Education System should bring the following changes:

- Establish the competences and duties of each entity more clearly, with emphasis on strengthening the federal government's role of co-ordinating national education, while diminishing its role as executor of policies.
- Establish national benchmarks for the provision of quality education, through the adoption of the index of Cost Pupil Quality and with the support of a tripartite council or body.
- Assign to each state government the role of overseeing education policies in their territories, by establishing clear criteria for issues such as: enrolment, curriculum, evaluation, teaching materials, selection and training of teachers.
- Create mechanisms to foster collaborative practices between municipalities, among which intermunicipal consortia and the institutionalisation of Education Development Arrangements.
- Give special attention to the North and Northeast regions: in light of the Brazilian federative pact, the SNE must guarantee the necessary conditions for quality and equity in educational care, especially at the basic level, seeking to overcome historical regional inequalities.

Given Brazil's decentralised education system, where federal, state and municipal entities are on equal footing, the design and implementation of a National Education System is a complex issue. The matter – as well as the many proposals mentioned above - remain the subject of heated debates between government entities, civil society and the general public.

Source: Adapted from: (OECD, 2020[29]), *Auditing Decentralised Policies in Brazil: Collaborative and Evidence-Based Approaches for Better Outcomes*, https://doi.org/10.1787/30023307-en.

Legal frameworks and policies structuring and guiding education in Brazil

A set of normative arrangements serve to structure and guide the education sector

Brazil enshrines in law and in key regulations certain education rights and guidelines, helping to ensure consistency and minimum standards in provision. Key elements include:

- Brazil's 1988 Federal Constitution established public education as a right to be provided free of charge at all education levels, from early childhood education to higher education.
- The 1996 National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da educação nacional*, LDB) defines the structure of Brazil's basic education and its education levels; sets the main responsibilities of the federal government, states, and municipalities in education, and lays down the minimum qualification levels for teachers.
- The PNE 2014-2024 sets out 20 targets to be achieved by the Brazilian educational system by 2024. Following the Plan, every state and municipality in Brazil has had to develop their own educational plan to support the achievement of the targets set in the PNE, while taking into account their own local needs and demands. Every two years, INEP publishes a monitoring report assessing progress towards the goals established in the PNE (see Table 1.2).

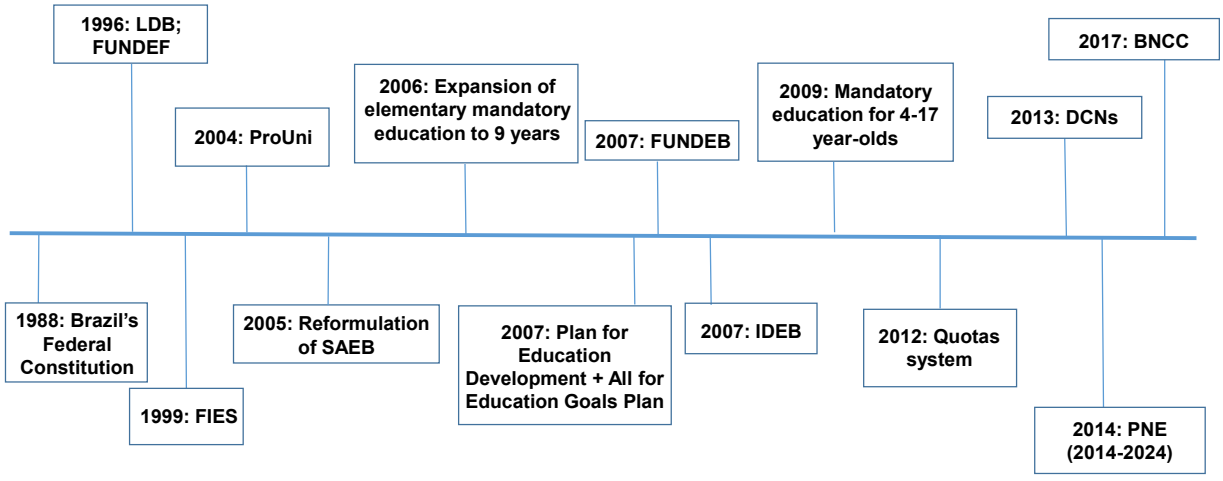
Table 1.2. Examples of PNE's (2014-2024) targets and their status in the most recent year with available data

Target	Indicator	Target,	Last result
Universalise, by 2016, early childhood education for 4-5 year-olds and expand the offer of early childhood education in daycare centres in order to attend at least 50% of 0-3 year-olds until the end of the term of this PNE.	1A: Percentage of 4-5 year-olds who attend school /daycare centre	100% (by 2016)	93.8% (2018)
	1B: Percentage of 0-3 year-olds attending school / daycare	50%	35.7% (2018)
Raise the average schooling years of 18-29 year-olds in order to achieve at least 12 years of study in the last year of this Plan for the population of the countryside, regions with the lowest level of education in the country and the poorest 25%, and also equalising the average level of education between blacks and non-blacks as per declared to the IBGE	8A: Average schooling, in years of study, of 18-29 year-olds	12 years	11.6 (2019)
To train, at the postgraduate level, 50% of the teachers working at pre-tertiary education (ISCED 0 to 3) until the last year of validity of this PNE, and guarantee to all professionals continuous education development in their area of expertise, considering the needs, demands and contextualisation of education systems.	16B: Percentage of teachers who participated in continuous education development programmes	100%	38.3% (2019)

Source: (INEP, 2020[36]), *Relatório do 3º ciclo de monitoramento das metas do Plano Nacional de Educação – 2020 [Report on the 3rd cycle of monitoring the goals of the National Education Plan – 2020]*, http://portal.inep.gov.br/informacao-da-publicacao/-/asset_publisher/6JYIsGMAMkW1/document/id/6957506 (accessed on 17 September 2020).

- The 2013 National Curriculum Guidelines (*Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais*, DCNs), covering ISCED 0 to 3, establish the structure of curricula for all these levels, and, individually for each education level (ISCED 0, ISCED 1 and 2, ISCED 3), as well as for special education modalities such as Quilombola Schools[4] and Indigenous School Education. The DCNs establish the structure of the curricula to be followed by all schools.
- The recently introduced National Common Curricular Base (*Base Nacional Comum Curricular*, BNCC), which defines minimum national learning standards in each stage of Brazil's basic education. The BNCC is not a curriculum per se but offers content guidelines for curriculum planning. This achievement follows years of work and intensive consultation. In 2017, the BNCC was approved for early childhood education (0-5 year-olds), primary and lower secondary education and a year after, for upper-secondary education. Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary schools had until the beginning of 2020 school year to implement the BNCC's guidelines – including curriculum adaptation, training of the teaching staff, updating teaching materials, etc. For upper-secondary education, schools will have until 2022 to apply the changes.
- The Basic Education Maintenance and Development Fund (*Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica*, FUNDEB). It was implemented to replace its predecessor, the Primary and Lower Secondary Education Maintenance, Development and Teacher Promotion Fund (*Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento do Ensino Fundamental e de Valorização do Magistério,* FUNDEF), which was in place from 2007 until the end of 2020. FUNDEB redistributes financial resources across states, backed by a contribution from the federal government. It is currently being relaunched from 2021 with a new mandate and as a permanent feature of Brazil's education funding system (see Chapter 4).

Figure 1.8. Set of some of the main legal frameworks, policies, and reforms in the education sector in the past three decades



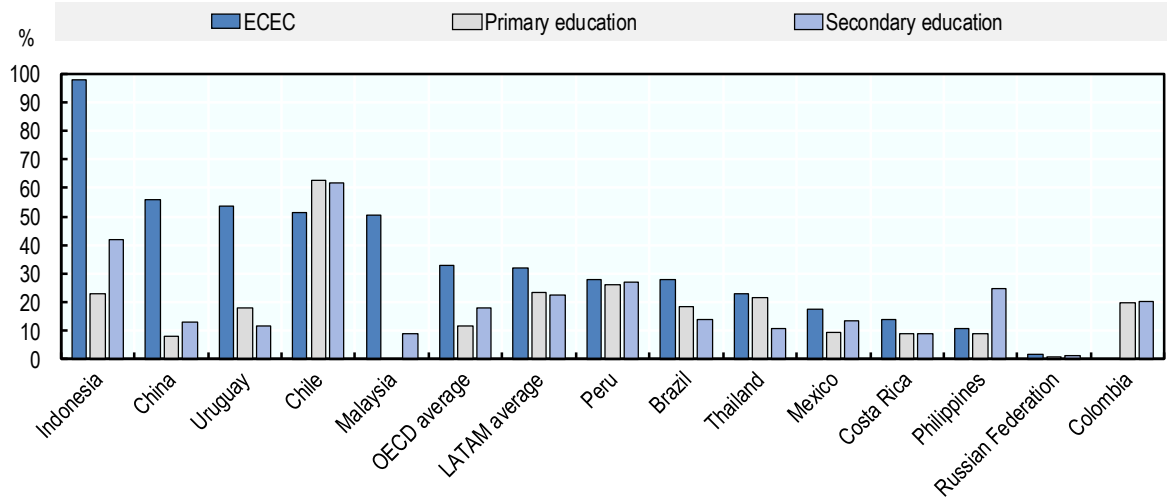
Source: Adapted from (Todos pela Educação, 2019[37]), *Propostas para Aprimoramento nos Mecanismos de Financiamento da Educação Básica [Proposals for Improvement in Basic Education Financing Mechanisms]*, https://www.todospelaeducacao.org.br/_uploads/_posts/258.pdf (accessed on 10 September 2020).

The role of the private sector

At the basic level, most students are enrolled in public schools. Students in the private sector come from wealthier backgrounds

In the Brazilian basic level, most students are enrolled in public institutions (81%) (INEP, 2020[38]) (see Figure 1.9). Private institutions charge a monthly fee for students' enrolments, and fees are unregulated. Grants and scholarships for private schools are not common or publicly-supported. As a result, across all cycles of the basic level, most students in public schools come from the poorest socio-economic quintiles, while the reverse is true for private schools (see Table 1.3).

Figure 1.9. Share of students enrolled in private institutions, by education level, 2018



Note: Data for ECEC in Colombia is not available and data for primary education in Malaysia in not available. Countries are ordered in descending order from percentage of enrolment in ECEC in private institutions.
Source: (UNESCO-UIS, n.d.[39]), *UIS dataset*, http://data.uis.unesco.org/ (accessed on 29 June 2020).

StatLink https://stat.link/jp03yu

Table 1.3. Students per socio-economic quintile by education level and type of institution in Brazil, 2018

Socio-economic quintile in ascending order per household per-capita income	ECEC (ISCED 01 and 02)		Elementary education (ISCED 1 and 2)		Upper-secondary Education (ISCED 3)	
	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
Up to 20%	36,4%	8.5%	40.7%	7.2%	30.0%	5.3%
More than 20% up 40%	27.7%	14.7%	28.3%	13.7%	28.7%	9.8%
More than 40% up to 60%	19.1%	15.7%	17.1%	16.4%	21.0%	14.3%
More than 60% up to 80%	12.4%	22.6%	10.4%	22.6%	14.6%	23.9%
More than 80%	4.4%	38.5%	3.5%	40.0%	5.6%	46.7%

Source: Adapted from (IBGE, 2019[16]), *Síntese de Indicadores Sociais: Uma análise das condições de vida da população brasileira 2019 [Synthesis of Social Indicators: An analysis of the living conditions of the Brazilian population 2019]*, https://biblioteca.ibge.gov.br/visualizacao/livros/liv101678.pdf (accessed on 23 April, 2020).

Growth in private sector provision until the COVID-19 crisis

Demographic changes in Brazil mean that there are declining numbers of children and young people. As a result, in 2019, 47.9 million students were enrolled in Brazil's basic education system, around 9% less than in 2009 (INEP, 2009[40]). During the same period, public sector enrolments fell by around 14%, while private sector participation increased by 24% (INEP, 2009[40]). However, private sector growth has slowed since 2015 (INEP, 2020[38]), and in 2020 was thrown into sharp reverse by the COVID-19 crisis. One survey found that 60% of surveyed private schools have lost more than 10% of their students (Folha de São Paulo, 2020[41]) and according to some accounts, around 300 000 teachers working in private institutions have been let go during the pandemic – mainly because of the non-payment of tuition fees and lower school revenues (Folha de São Paulo, 2020[41]). According to the National Federation of Private Schools (*Federação Nacional das Escolas Particulares*, FENEP) around two-thirds of 0-3 year-olds will leave private crèche facilities in 2020 (Agência Brasil, 2020[42]). One potential impact will be a sudden influx of students into the public school system (see discussion in Chapter 7).

Rising demand for tertiary education, especially among poorer students, has been largely met by the private sector

Over three-quarters of bachelor's students in Brazil attend private universities, compared to less than one-third among OECD countries. (OECD, 2019[43]). Recent decades have witnessed a rapid increase in private sector enrolments, and in the number of private higher education institutions, following regulatory relaxation from the end of the 1990s (Traina-Chacon and Calderón, 2015[44]; Barros, 2015[45]). Government funding programmes such as the Student Financing Fund (*Financiamento Estudantil*, FIES) and the "University for All" Programme (*Programa Universidade para Todos*, ProUni), (see Chapter 2) expanded access by helping disadvantaged students to enrol in private institutions. However, the public higher education network has a higher share of poorer individuals enrolled if compared to private higher education institutions (9.7% and 5.5%, respectively) (IBGE, 2019[16]). Overall, higher education is still mainly accessed by the most privileged individuals (see Table 1.3).The equity challenges of entry and participation in tertiary education are further discussed in Chapters 2 and 4.

Recent and emerging issues

Upper secondary reform

A major reform of upper secondary education was agreed in 2017 and is now being implemented. Students will follow a common core programme (including mandatory Portuguese and mathematics in all years) alongside options in one (or more) programmes: languages; mathematics; natural sciences; human and social sciences; technical and professional training. Vocational education is no longer a separate track, but has instead become an optional component of students' upper secondary studies. The reform reduces the number of mandatory subjects to be taught every year throughout the three years of upper secondary education and progressively increases class time, with schools having to reach 1 000 annual hours by 2022. Up to 1 800 of the total hours making up upper secondary education will cover the BNCC, and at least 1 200 hours will be used to cover the optional pathways students choose to pursue according to the availability of programmes offered by schools.

The reform is intended to improve quality, align the curriculum and instruction methods with student needs, offer more choice and make upper secondary education more attractive and engaging – a key requirement given high dropout rates at this level (see Chapter 2). Education networks, together with schools, will have flexibility to develop their curricula and programme offer. This approach offers considerable advantages, which must be set alongside the risk that the degree of choice will depend very much on the resources available to the school (Catelli, 2017[46]). Looking to the future, key challenges include the use of extra

teaching hours, the precise structure of vocational programmes, as well as training of teachers (Muylaert, 2019[47]; Catelli, 2017[46]).

The COVID-19 crisis

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, most schools in Brazil closed for the most part of 2020 and into the first quarter of 2021[5]. In total, estimates reveal that schools closed for over 40 weeks during the pandemic crisis (UNESCO, n.d.[48]). While online and other forms of distance teaching were developed in response, differences in households' access to the Internet, parents' capacity to provide support to their children, coupled with disparities across school systems in their ability to implement effective education responses during the crisis, meant that students from disadvantaged backgrounds and schools often missed important learning opportunities. This also contributed to amplifying gaps across students and raising dropout rates.

However, the impact of COVID-19 is not only seen in students' learning outcomes. Confinement and social distancing have negative consequences for students' overall well-being. Being prevented from going to school and having to stay home increases the risk of poor nutrition among children, their potential exposure to domestic violence, as well as raising stress and anxiety levels among young people (OECD, 2020[49]). As, hopefully, the pandemic recedes, the main challenge will become that of re-opening schools under new physical distancing measures and hygiene protocols, implementing learning recovery plans for the students who have had their learning interrupted and providing socio-emotional support to children. This issue is discussed throughout this report, but particularly in Chapter 7.

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Notes

[1] Costa Rica is still in the process of becoming a full OECD member country. In May 2020, OECD countries unanimously decided to invite Costa Rica to become a member of the Organisation. Costa Rica's accession, extending the OECD's membership to 38 countries, will take effect after the country has taken the appropriate steps at the national level to accede to the OECD Convention, and deposited its instrument of accession with the French government, the depository of the Convention.

[2] This figure is likely underestimating the actual levels of unemployment in the country, since it does not take into account the large numbers of unemployed people who are not even looking for a job.

[3] Poverty gap at USD 5.50 (dollars) a day (2011 purchasing power parity, PPP) (%).

[4] Quilombola schools are schools implemented in quilombola settings (quilombos). Quilombos are Brazilian settlements founded and formed by descendants of enslaved Africans, who mostly live on subsistence agriculture on lands which were donated, purchased or that have been occupied for a long time. Quilombola schools were implemented as a way of supporting the local culture, traditions, and ways of learning. These schools were regulated in 2012 with the creation of National Curricular Guidelines for the Quilombola Scholar Education.

[5] Responses to school operations have varied across Brazil. Some states and municipalities have closed schools, others have left them fully open or employed hybrid models. Approaches have also depended on the education level.