

Brazil

Demographics for Brazil

Population:	186,112,794
GDP (by PPP method):	US\$1.492 trillion
Currency (inc code):	Real (BRL)
Language(s):	Portuguese (official), Spanish, English, French
Internet country code:	.br

Primary and secondary education

The Brazilian education system is managed by MEC, the Ministry of Education and Culture. Students pass through three levels of education before college, and these are managed by the Secretary for Basic Education (SEB). Early childhood education is optional and includes daycare and preschool. Fundamental education is required and all citizens are legally guaranteed free access. Recently fundamental education was changed to begin at six years of age instead of seven and now lasts a total of nine years. What would be called high school in the USA is called middle instruction or “colegial” in Portuguese and covers three years from about 15-17 years of age.

In general cities are responsible for the fundamental education of their students, with states picking up more responsibility for the high school years. This leaves tremendous disparities between the education offered in different regions of the country. While the country averages 91 percent literacy, in the poor northeast region literacy is only 84 percent, while in the southeast it is 97 percent (source: IBGE demographic census 1991 posted on MEC site January 2006).

Drop-out rates are quite high and some public schools turn students away because of overcrowding, while the government reports that there is more space in the public system than students attending. Additionally, the poor reputation of

the public school system drives many families to send their children to private schools. Many private schools are Catholic or Methodist but many others have no religious affiliation. As with public schools, there are great disparities in the quality of private education. There is also a wide range of charges for tuition. With a strong belief in the opportunities education provides for economic advancement, even middle and lower middle class families scrape together resources to send their children to private schools. Since free federal university tuition is available to students who earn the highest scores on the entrance exams, families pay for private high school education and preparatory courses in hopes of securing these highly selective free federal openings. Recently some rules have changed and some affirmative action type programs have been implemented to improve equal access to higher education for previously underserved groups.

Of ten million students in the 15-17 age range, only 37 percent are enrolled in high school. About 10 percent in this age group are still studying at fundamental levels or taking trade school programs which are not a formal part of the Brazilian education system (source: SEB site, January 2006).

Higher education

University education is managed by the Secretary for Higher Education (SESU). Approximately 10 percent of the population between 18 and 24 years of age studies at the university level. Admission to both public and private universities is primarily based on “vestibulares”, which are entrance exams developed by each school individually and with diverse formats and levels of difficulty. Students who pass the entrance exam and earn admission to federal universities attend tuition fee-free. There are 122,000 openings for students in federal universities throughout the country (source: SESU site, January 2006).

Public universities include federal-, state- and city-managed institutions. Private universities can be either managed as for-profit businesses or as not-for-profit entities with tax benefits.

CAPES is the division of the Ministry of Education that manages Master’s and Doctoral level academic standards and support. Programs are systematically evaluated and awarded points for their quality of performance on a 1-7 scale with 7 being the highest and 3 being the minimum acceptable for an institution’s diplomas to be officially recognized. Each diploma-granting program is evaluated individually every three years. In 1995 there were 1,000 Master’s programs and 600 Doctoral programs serving 60,000 students. By 2005 there were an additional 900 Master’s programs and 500 Doctoral programs (source: www.capes.gov.br, accessed January 2006).

Two types of graduate programs are recognized by the Brazilian Ministry of Education. *Lato sensu* or “specialization” courses award recognized certificates and require at least 360 hours of course work or approximately two years. These courses are characterized as “continuing education”. *Lato sensu* courses require an undergraduate degree to enter and do not require a thesis to

graduate. *Stricto sensu* courses award a Master's or Doctorate degree. Approximately two years of study and a thesis are required for a Master's degree and approximately four years of study, including a dissertation, are required for a Doctorate. A Master's degree in business may be academic or professional in focus. It is important to note that the traditional US-style MBA (that requires no research thesis) is considered a *lato sensu* program, i.e. it is considered a specialization certificate and not a Master's degree in Brazil.

Besides traditional classes, the Brazilian government recognizes distance learning programs that use various communication media but do not require that students and professors meet face-to-face. Blended programs that combine distance learning and traditional formats are also recognized.

CAPES also manages international partnerships between Brazilian and foreign universities. Ten nations are actively involved in about 25 bilateral projects funded by CAPES with another three multinational programs. The department funds programs such as faculty and student exchanges (with mutual recognition of student credits) and joint research projects. A popular student exchange is called the "sandwich scholarship" in which students take the first and last part of their graduate studies in Brazil and between these periods they study at a foreign university with funding by CAPES. Visiting Foreign Professors (PVE) are recognized, funded and encouraged by CAPES. Additionally, grants to study in Brazil are awarded competitively to students from Portuguese-speaking countries.

Structure of business and management education

The basic business curriculum in Brazil looks similar to a US MBA with courses covering a broad spectrum of area-based management topics such as human resources, operations, marketing, organizational behavior, finance and economics. In fact, the first focused business administration curriculum in Brazil was launched in the 1950s by Escola de Administração de Empresas de São Paulo da Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV-EAESP) with input and faculty training from Michigan State University. However, the Brazilian educational system was originally influenced more by Europe than the USA and even management studies maintain aspects of humanities and critical studies not common in US core courses. Management education has grown exponentially with the number of undergraduate programs nearly tripling from 969 in year 2000 to 2,687 in year 2002 (Wood and Paes de Paula, 2003).

The Ministry of Education of the Brazilian Federal Government is the only agency that can officially recognize degree programs. Because the MBA was not part of the Brazilian system and so not supervised or regulated, some schools offered this title as a form of borrowed prestige without regard to its meaning in English. There was a time when it was possible to earn an "MBA" in a month or to earn an "MBA" in physical therapy. The public is better

educated now about the meaning of the acronym, and MBAs are generally extended programs in business and management.

There are four basic types of business administration programs in Brazil: undergraduate degrees, programs offered at the Master's level (there are two types of programs at this level, as explained in the previous section: *lato sensu* is a recognized post-undergraduate certificate, and *stricto sensu* is an actual Master's degree), Doctoral degrees, and executive education courses (executive education certificates are valued in the employment market but are not officially recognized as degrees by the Ministry of Education). Students generally earn an undergraduate degree in business in about four years. Internships are common and often required. In schools that target a less-affluent market, students study part-time while working, and many schools provide courses at night, on weekends, or in modular formats to accommodate student time pressures.

Almost all graduate programs (except those in federal universities) are part-time with students working full-time while going to school. For this reason, students in Brazilian programs are often older than their US counterparts and hold higher positions in their companies. Some management programs are *lato sensu* and others are *stricto sensu* with the latter requiring more hours of study and an original thesis. To make the distinction clear to their market, some *stricto sensu* programs identify themselves as Master's of Professional Studies (MPAs) rather than as MBAs. Most Master's level programs (certificate programs and Master's degree programs) require about two-years to complete. Some schools offer degrees in innovative formats such as online or in-company with faculty delivering classes to a cohort group that meets for classes at corporate headquarters. Recently focused MBAs are being offered in areas such as health, agriculture and logistics.

Several schools offer Doctoral degrees in business. However, it is rare in Brazil to pursue a full-time career in academia. Some Doctoral programs are structured like advanced MBAs with a practical focus for rising executives. This is in contrast with US and European Doctoral programs that focus on training career faculty with greater emphasis on research and theory. Recently some Doctoral programs are responding to national demand for more business school professors by shifting the focus of their training to better prepare students for academic careers.

Executive education is a huge business in Brazil, and schools work closely with companies to tailor course content and formats to meet the ongoing educational and training needs of managers. It is not uncommon for mid-level executives to return to school for a few refresher courses from time to time. When choosing a program, students select based on format convenience as well as for content and reputation of the program. Weekend seminars, short retreats, night classes, and block modules are all common formats. It is also common to have executive classes conveniently located at a company facility, a second campus of the school, or in a hotel or conference center. Leaving Brazil for a

short course of several weeks in the USA or Europe is quite prestigious and valued for career progression.

The primary academic association of business schools is ANPAD (the National Association of Graduate Programs and Research in Administration). Since 1976 the organization has grown from eight to 54 member schools, all offering *stricto sensu* degrees. The Association does not offer accreditation like AACSB or EFMD but does work with the federal government to promote high standards in management education and research. They also offer a standardized admission test, sponsor a large annual conference in late September (ENANPAD), and sponsor several themed conferences.

Objective criteria for identifying partner schools are available, though these cover a fairly limited number of Brazilian programs in administration. Brazilian MBAs are ranked by *Você, SA*, a popular business magazine in Brazil, as well as by *América Economía* that ranks all Latin American MBA programs. A few schools in Brazil have earned accreditation by one or another of the various international management education organizations: AACSB, EFMD and AMBA. Student exchange opportunities are available with some Brazilian schools but are somewhat limited, since relatively few schools offer classes in English or have an established infrastructure and logistics support for non-Brazilian students. However, most schools are willing to develop new programs with trusted partners, if these will also benefit their own students and faculty.

Current issues in management education

As recently as a decade ago, relatively few schools dominated the field of management education in Brazil. The recent explosion in management programs was a response to limited access and large unmet demand. Federal, state, religious and private not-for-profit institutions added programs in business administration or expanded existing programs. Additionally, a significant number of private for-profit schools entered the market as strong players with positive recognition by the federal government. Foreign universities, primarily from the USA, also entered Brazil to offer their degrees to Brazilian students usually with faculty flown in for short periods. Market forces have begun to slow the rapid growth, eliminate redundant or weak programs, and consolidate strong offerings. However, there is still significant shifting in progress, as increased competition is forcing change among even experienced and well-regarded institutions.

The wide variety of formats and content options in management education has produced an equally wide range of quality in management education. Corporations and partners should consider the reputation of the school with whom they affiliate. However, because few schools are active internationally, access to information about reputation and academic credentials can be

difficult to obtain. While rankings and accreditation are helpful, they simply do not cover the vast majority of programs in Brazil.

Though many Brazilian schools are staffed with a high percentage of faculty with earned PhDs, few of these are full-time educators and researchers. Most professors work in government, industry, or private consulting in addition to their teaching and research. The corporate-classroom link is an advantage to students who benefit from the practitioner perspectives of their professors. However, the conflicting demands on faculty and the tight economic conditions facing many private institutions work together to limit the amount of academic research that is produced. At the same time, increased competition, the introduction of national rankings, and the search for international accreditation have put new pressure on universities to support academic research. Universities are searching for models that will meet the immediate needs of their faculty, students, and budgets, while also supporting the long-term process of meaningful academic research.

Finally among the issues facing management education in Brazil, the Portuguese and English languages have a few false-cognates and concepts that translate awkwardly. Because these can introduce confusion in international dialogues, a few are clarified here.

Executive education – since almost all graduate programs in Brazil are attended by students who work full-time and study part-time, the term executive MBA does not distinguish between full- and part-time programs as it does in the USA. In Brazil, the term executive MBA can be confused with other forms of executive education not leading to a degree.

Lato sensu and *stricto sensu* – since an MBA in Brazil could be of either type, it is necessary for foreign schools to clarify how their program would be classified in the Brazilian system. This can mean the difference between whether or not a graduate with a US MBA is qualified to teach in a Brazilian university or earn a Brazilian PhD. Programs without a thesis are not recognized by the Brazilian government as graduate diplomas.

“*Colégio*” “*Colegial*” – though it sounds like college, this means high school in Portuguese.

Graduação/Pos-graduação – the word that sounds like graduation in English refers to undergraduate studies in Brazil. Graduate studies in Brazil are actually called postgraduate.

Thesis/dissertation – in Brazil the dissertation is the research report that accompanies the Master’s degree, while the thesis is the research report that accompanies the PhD. In US schools it is the opposite with the thesis accompanying the Master’s degree and the dissertation accompanying the PhD.

Dr Victoria Jones

Director, Business Studies for the Americas, University of Texas at San Antonio College of Business

Sources

Various sites and publications of the Brazilian Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), www.anpad.org.br, Wood Jr., Thomaz; and Paes de Paula, Ana Paula. Business Education in Brazil: Hybridism and Tensions. In: Alon, I.; & McIntyre, J. (editors) Business Education and Emerging Markets: Perspectives and Best Practices. New York: Kluwer Academic / Plenum Publishers, 2004.

