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Brazil, factor 16: Education

Education in Brazil

“Education is the powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”
- *Nelson Mandela*

Families in Brazil tend to run slightly larger than families in America. The size of the Brazilian family is about three to four kids. The United States average is around two to three children. Traditionally, family is the foundation of social structure in Brazil. In the past, Brazilian families tended to be large. Today, many Brazilian households have two working adults, and the number of single parent households has increased. Family is still valued highly, but divorce and marital separation are much more common. Many women are now the head of their household. In Brazil, family is number one. If you don't have family, there is no survival.

The diet of a typical Brazilian family starts with breakfast. Each region has its own typical breakfast. It is common to find tropical fruits, cuscuz (pasta and cooked vegetables), grilled ham-and-cheese-sandwiches, bread and butter, mortadella (a large Italian sausage), ham, cheese, ham and cheese, ham and requeijão (a cheese spread), smoked turkey and cheese, smoked turkey and requeijão (a ricotta-like cheese), honey, or jam. Drinks can be sweetened coffee, juice, hot chocolate, or sweetened tea.

Brunch is the after breakfast before lunch meal. For example, it would contain crackers or a cookie with a small sandwich. The drink to go with it would be a juice or milk. The midday dinner or lunch normally is the biggest meal. Rice is a major item of the Brazilian diet, although it is not uncommon to eat pasta instead. It is usually eaten together with beans, boiled dry legumes (a very healthy plant) and some other kind of protein, and may be served together with farofa (a toasted flour of manioc or corn), polenta (Latin for crushed grain), salads and/or cooked vegetables.

Early supper (the jantar) for most Brazilians is a light meal. Soups, salads, pasta, hamburgers or hot-dogs, pizza or repeating midday dinner foods are the most common dishes. In a late supper (the ceia), Brazilians eat soups, salads, pasta and what would be eaten at the elevenses (brunch) if their jantar was a light one early in the evening. It is associated with Christian holidays, like Christmas. Instead of having one huge meal, they'll have two smaller meals.

Every child goes to school from the ages of 6 to 14. Only one third of the children make it past sixth grade. Many children drop out because they live in rural areas or have to work to make money to help their family. The government is trying to improve situations so more children can attend school. According to a 2012 article in *The Economist*, only 11 percent of the Brazilian population has a post-secondary qualification, as compared to approximately 40 percent of Americans. Though, it is also true that access is often skewed towards wealthier Brazilian students, since these students tend to pursue private school education which gives them an advantage on competitive entrance examinations. (IB times).

Having a good education is an important factor in finding a job. Only 43% of adults aged 25-64 have earned the equivalent of a high school degree. The children only go to school until 6th grade and then go to work on the family farm or get a job to help their family. And as mentioned before, post

secondary education is aimed more for wealthier Brazilian families that have their children enrolled in private schools, which gives them more of an upper hand when it comes to competitive entrance exams. Brazilian students who do not gain admittance to secondary schooling often turn to agriculture or field work as a career.

Health care in Brazil is funded by the Brazilian government. The Ministry of Health is responsible for public health services, government hospitals and medical services. Any legal citizen is entitled to free healthcare. The clinics offer good care, however, they are overcrowded because they are free. Brazil has non profit health organizations and a private medical sector to help make these services available to everyone in Brazil.

In Brazil, there aren't many farms at all, but they do have some. The farms they do have are very large. They're around 24,000 hectares (200 times the average size of Iowa farms). The types of stuff farmed there are: coffee, soybeans, wheat, rice, corn, sugarcane, cocoa, citrus, beef, hogs and chickens.

Farmers pioneered "no-till" agriculture, in which the soil is not plowed nor the crop harvested at ground level. Rather, it is cut high on the stalk and the remains of the plant are left to rot into a mat of organic material. Next year's crop is then planted directly into the mat, retaining more nutrients in the soil. They use a variety of soybeans that are more tolerant than usual of acid soils. It speeds up the plants' growing period, cutting between eight to twelve weeks off the usual life cycle.

Brazil occupies a unique position: it is not only a leader in commodity production, but also in mitigation of carbon emissions from deforestation. Brazil launched "Low-Carbon Agriculture" plan. The program has been slow in getting started. The demand for commodities has been growing more rapidly than supply, causing increases in prices and the profitability of converting forests and Cerrado. For Brazil to maintain its leadership in commodity production for internal and export markets, they need to choose to either a horizontal expansion of agriculture, leading to more deforestation or a goal of low-carbon development in rural areas, where best practices in agriculture and ranching would increase their productivity and would lead to new deforestation. Brazil's highest environmental danger is soil erosion. Soil erosion removes nutrients and causes the loss of structure, texture and the decrease of infiltration rates and water retention.

Brazil produces enough food to meet demand, but due to the country's highly skewed income distributions, the lowest-income population segments are consuming less than their basic nutritional requirements. The poor cannot afford food produced within their own country, and farms are incentivized to export their crops amid rising international market prices for soy and grains. Since the poor can't afford to buy food, they have to grow their own food or don't eat.

Having an education can help Brazilians get a better paying job. Parents that have a high salary job can send their children to school, because they don't need extra income to live off of. Their children can then get an education and get a well paying job. Low income family can't afford to send their children to school because they often need them to work. Some children can't go to school because of malnutrition and lack of sufficient school grounds. So achieving a sufficient paying job in Brazil is based on your education and that depends on how well off your parent's are.

In Brazil, households are very poor. The average family income is lower than \$23,938 USD a year. In terms of employment, over 67% people have paid jobs at the age of 15 to 64 and 11% of the

employed population work very long and hard 12 hours a day. Only 43% of adults have a GED or a high school degree. By not having an education, people have lower paying jobs and have a hard time supporting their families. Parents can't afford to send the children to school because they need them to work to help support the family.

The schooling in Brazil is very expensive because of the high demand for teachers. Most people make it to 6th grade if they are lucky, and making it to college is almost impossible. Many people wish to graduate high school and go to college most end up having to drop out of high school to get a job and make money to help support the family and take care of their younger siblings. The standards of primary and secondary public education have been failing over the past decades. Since the country invests little in education, public education's standards have dropped and the middle class families have enrolled their children into private schools. Some teachers do not feel well educated to teach children. Teachers complain that conditions are intimidating and the pay is too low.

The trends in education are slowly improving today. More people are graduating instead of dropping out of school. Education is getting better because people are getting into college and becoming teachers, which are in really high demand. The government is creating programs that offer partial and full scholarships to students so they can attend public schools. Teachers are also getting better educations so they are better equipped to teach children. Brazil is working on reforming its school systems, teachers unions and spending more on basic education.

The poverty level could decrease because people would be qualified to have higher paying jobs. The demand for jobs will go down because people will be trained to do certain things and can make careers out of their training. This will be a bad thing, because finding a job will become harder. Plus student debt will become a problem if post grads can't find jobs to pay off student loans. By improving the education system, it will break the cycle of families needing their children to work to help support their families.

The government is taking steps forward to improving the situations dealing with schools. The foreign debt that takes so much of the government's money is being paid off and the extra funds will be allocated to make allowances for education. Unicef is an organization that helps build a world where the rights of every child are recognized. They have the global authority to influence decision makers and the variety of partners at the grassroots level to turn the most innovative ideas into reality. That makes them unique among world organizations, and unique among those working with the young. They currently have a project called the EducAmazonia project that is working to improve the quality of basic education for 680,000 children attending rural schools in Brazil. Unicef believes in giving children the best start in life, because proper care at a young age forms the strongest foundation for a person's future.

Brazil offers Conditional Cash Transfers to students, and as of January 2011, has one of the largest CCT programs of any country. The transfers are currently paid to 26% of the population. Bolsa Escola is a cash transfer program (social welfare program) that provides cash payments to poor families with children ages 6 to 15 in exchange for their enrollment in school and their attendance of at least 85% of school days. Families must ensure their children attend school and are vaccinated. The program's dual aims are to reduce short term poverty by direct cash aid, and fight long term poverty by increasing educational and experiential skills among the poor.

Only 62% of basic school teachers in Brazil have a college degree which should be standard for teaching basic education. It is important that teachers are trained in the disciplines they teach. Several studies show that teaching quality is mainly related to factors more difficult to measure, such as talent to teach and motivation. Teachers should be assessed and rewarded for their level of education.

High quality schools can do so much to increase the learning of children raised in poor environments. Several studies show that high quality early childhood educational programs are effective in improving the school performance of children raised in poor conditions. Teachers should receive intensive training in early education. There should be more teachers so the class sizes can be smaller and teachers can dedicate more time to each child. There also needs to be a well planned curriculum structure that establishes an educational routine. Parents also need to be involved in their child's education.

Over the past decade, the federal government has launched a major effort to improve education, increasing spending in classrooms and on teacher salaries and providing extra help for poorer families in order to get children into the classrooms..

Public schooling is free and families need to take an advantage of that and send their children to school to get an education. Instead, poor families depend on the children to work to provide an income for the family to live off of. Many parents are single parents and do not have an education so they cannot get high paying jobs. Poor families need to break the cycle and let their children get an education so they can make a living for themselves and families when they get older. Families need to take advantage of programs that Unicef and Conditional Cash Transfer provide. Parents need to send their kids to school because not only for an education but so they get a free meal and it keeps them off the streets and away from the violence.

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