

## The internationalization of basic education in Brazil: An approach to the case of Brasília-DF

### La internacionalización de la educación básica en Brasil: Una aproximación al caso de Brasilia-DF

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#### Background

The process of internationalization of education acquired centrality in Brazil, both in the educational reality and in academic research. The movement started approximately in the second half of the last century, worked through postgraduate programs and exchanges abroad that gradually spread to other levels of the educational system. Currently, educational internationalization in Brazil is evidenced by the increase in the supply of international schools and colleges, the diversity of certifications and credentials of language proficiency, the availability of internships and exchanges, and the opportunity to continue higher education in the outside. Based on academic research focused on São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte and observing this new segmentation of the Brazilian private educational system, this work, located in Brasilia, explores, on the one hand, the growing private educational offer and, on the other, the educational strategies implemented by the middle and upper middle sectors residents of the Brazilian capital, in order to insert themselves in a global order. It seeks to understand the preference of families from privileged Brazilian sectors to educate their children in international institutions instead of choosing national educational proposals oriented to the preparation for higher studies in the country. The choice of the study locus is due to the singular characteristics of the Federal District. Brasilia, located in the central-western region of Brazil, is the seat of Brazilian political power and brings together inhabitants from all states. Its educational offer presents a high degree of diversification. In the public sector, regular schools and colleges coexist with park-schools and classroom-schools - belonging to the Brasilia construction plan (1960)- and offer recreational and artistic activities complementary to the school day. In the private sector, traditional secular schools, denominational schools, alternative proposals (Montessorian, anthroposophical), philanthropic, bilingual and international schools coexist.

#### Aims

The main objective is to identify and understand if the causes of the recent growth of international schools in Brasilia is linked to an unsatisfied educational demand in local institutions or to an objective of social and educational differentiation of the middle and upper middle social sectors. Likewise, to identify, on the one hand, what are the singularities of these international institutions -supply- and on the other, what are the reasons that support the school choice by families -demand. The article sought to understand the correlation between the expectations of families at the time of school choice and the differentiated pedagogical projects of the schools analysed.

#### Method & procedures

The study is exploratory with a qualitative approach, inspired by Brazilian academic research that studies the schooling of the middle and upper middle classes in different Brazilian cities in the last thirty years. As research techniques, we used, on the one hand, the documentary analysis of the pedagogical proposals and the instruments of internationalization of the institutions and, on the other, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with students' mothers for the elaboration of a socio-demographic profile.

#### Results & discussion

The creation of the first international schools in Brasilia is almost simultaneous to the founding of the capital (1961) and the installation of embassies and international organizations, which receives, in its origins, expatriate families

mobilized to preserve the language and culture of their country of origin. Between 1999 and 2021, six new international schools are established, with diversified proposals, new certifications and varied credentials. Currently, Brazilian students dominate the enrolment of these institutions. Likewise, the study revealed the interest of mothers in offering ever earlier -from kindergarten- international experiences of socialization and language certifications for the continuation of studies abroad, underestimating other aspects at the time of school choice, such as: proximity, physical space, continuity between family and school values, the position of the school in the educational rankings. This new panorama shows that families from the more affluent classes reveal having the skills and financial means to distinguish the differences between the establishments and the characteristics of their children, which makes it possible to make an adjustment between the two (child-matching), choosing the "appropriate" school" for each one.

### Conclusion

It can be deduced that the increasingly early internationalization (from the age of two) of their children's education constitutes an important strategy for families endowed with cultural, social and economic capital to facilitate the future academic training and subsequent professional insertion of their children. Driven by the progressive demand in a country that has a large internal market, the bilingual and international educational offer grows from the entry of new international networks and corporations, altering, to a certain extent, the founding characteristics of international schools. The impossibility of interviewing the directors constituted a limitation of the study and a pending for future research. However, the strength of the study is, perhaps, the exploration of the range of family expectations projected in the schooling of their children: fluency in the foreign language as a native, multicultural enrichment through socialization with foreign students, articulation with foreign universities and, even, the maturation and self-management of young people in the case of living abroad. In this context, the greater presence of Brazilian students in these schools, the presence of foreign teachers, but also local ones, the increase in accreditations and linguistic certifications (Cambridge, IBO, Bac) in order to legitimize, locally, the process of internationalization of the education offered were analysed. This scenario deepens the gaps and reinforces the existing educational, social and economic privileges between the different Brazilian social classes.

**Keywords:** Brasilia, elites, internationalization of education, privileged groups, school choice

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