

There Is No Future without Good Primary Education

“Water dropping day by day wears the hardest rock away”. This popular saying should enlighten and guide the actions of all those committed to improving the educational level and reducing truancy in Brazilian schools.

Sometimes, we seem to forget that from 100 students who start primary school, 44 make it to high school and only 12 go to college. Still worse is the fact that from those 12, not all manage to graduate and many exceed the regular periods of their courses.

Such numbers, though impressive, have not been sufficient yet to mobilize the political class and Brazilian society for a debate over the importance of education to turn Brazil into a developed and educated nation. It is more than time to stop being a “developing” country.

Every day the newspapers bring news about the lack of efficiency and innovation in our industrial sector, about the lack of competitiveness of Brazilian industry abroad and the lack of specialized professionals to answer to the demand of the domestic market in some sectors.

The root of most of these problems lies in the low educational level of the population.

No doubt the universalization of primary school from the 90's on has been a great step to increase schooling and, thus, reduce inequality in Brazil.

The government has implemented some actions to encourage young people to take the teacher-formation courses, in spite of the fact that the great majority of public higher education institutions still regard the teacher-formation courses as less important than other courses.

Among those actions, one can highlight the Institutional Program for Introduction to Teaching Scholarships (PIBID-CAPES), which aims at encouraging the formation of primary education teachers and raising the quality of the public school. But that is too little given the dimension of the Brazilian education problems.

Besides, considering the ways that public resources are currently being managed, to think that 10% of the GDP is the magic solution for the achievement of the educational goals is to keep making the same

mistakes that have been made by governments since the establishment of the Republic.

Now, the fight should be for a full-time school and for a teacher remuneration befitting their importance in society.

We can no longer be silent or be an accomplice to the present situation in which many state governments keep declaring they have no conditions to pay even the teachers' minimum wage and in which the great majority of schools utilize three-shift work.

With full-time high schools, chemistry, physics and science lab classes become feasible. But that will demand more investment in education, an accurate resource management and decent teachers' wages.

Through education, Brazil will not be restricted to being a primary raw material exporter or a manufactured product importer any more.

As water dropping day by day wears the hardest rock away, it should be reaffirmed that the scientific societies play an important role in the Brazilian education.¹⁻² The same way the Brazilian Mathematics Society is responsible for the PROFMAT, a professional graduate program designed for teacher formation, the Brazilian Chemical Society should reflect upon a PROFQUIM, because successful experiences such as PROFMAT should be duplicated.

Chemistry, physics, math and science Olympiads are as important as the sports one. Imagine the day when every Brazilian receives a mobile phone message saying that another Brazilian student has received a gold medal in the international school Olympics.

Making dreams come true requires, first of all, will and action. Thus, with work, courage and intelligence, Brazilian education can be changed.

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References

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