A Conditional Cash Transfer Program in Brazil: How *Bolsa Família* came to affect Millions of Children

Mona Keshavarz
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Abstract

Historically as a region, Latin America has during a long period of time adopted different policies to reduce the high rates of poverty and inequality. Latin America has faced great difficulties with an unsustainable political development. The elite and to a certain extent the middle class, have been the biggest winners and benefiting from the globalization. The workers and the poor people lacked pensions or a social security for illness, unemployment or injuries, this lead to a growing segregation between the rich and the poor and eventually causing larger inequality gaps. The implementation of the conditional cash transfer programs, such as the Bolsa Família program in Brazil, are aimed to reduce both short term (through cash transfers for immediate poverty alleviation) and long term poverty (through investments in human capital) as well as reducing the inequality. The evaluations of the program have shown positive results in dropouts and school enrollment but very little can be said about how/if the program has affected school results and performances. Overall, the quality of education is questioned and more resources need to be invested for improvements. The state has played an active role in the implementation of the program. It is not clear whether the Brazilian state sees the program as a tool for poverty relief or as a long-term goal to free the population from poverty. The biggest effects the program has on the educational development of children derives from their home environment.

**Keywords**
Welfare state, conditional cash transfer programs, *Bolsa Família*, education, children
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1. Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

As a tool to reduce the widely spread poverty and inequality in Latin America, many countries have implemented the conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs in their social policy. The aim of the programs is to reduce both short-term and long-term poverty. The key features of the programs are: (a) poor households are targeted via some kind of selection (b) the families are given cash and (c) the beneficiaries are given some sort of responsibility or criteria in order to receive the money.

The criteria may include school attendance or enrollment in public schools, regular health check-ups, vaccinations etc. An important feature of the programs is to encourage and promote relationships between the beneficiaries, the service providers and the governments by focusing on inclusion of the poor, especially on children. By focusing on children the governments hope to eventually break the cycle of poverty.

During a long period of time, there were several different forms of financial programs to help the population with socio-economic difficulties. In 2003, elected President Luis Inácio “Lula” da Silva came to power. Together with the Brazilian government, he decided to unify all previous programs and instead launch one new social welfare program named Bolsa Família (family allowance/grant). Poor Brazilian families had now the opportunity to seek financial aid through Bolsa Família (Hall 2006:689-701).

1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

Since the launch of the Bolsa Família in 2003, scholars now estimate that approximately 46 million Brazilians are enrolled in the program. The government has invested a lot of resources to both expand and develop the program. This paper has two objectives. Firstly, the aim is to study the relation between the states political evolvement and social policies. The second objective is to study how well the Bolsa Família program has succeeded in education outcomes.
- What is the State’s role in relation to the launch of the Bolsa Família program?

- How has the implementation of the Bolsa Família program affected the educational development of children in primary school?

1.3 Disposition

The paper addresses the initial research questions in five parts. After an introduction to the subject found in chapter 1, the second part provides the theoretical base of the study and the key concepts are presented to understand the background and historical context of the Brazilian society. The third part presents a general overview of conditional cash transfer programs and how the program works in Brazil. In the fourth part, the study looks closer on both the educational system in Brazil and the effects of Bolsa Família on children’s school performance. In the final part, the context of the study is analyzed with the help of the key concept introduced in the second part.

1.4 Method

This report will consist of secondary sources, such as books found in the Latin American Library and the Stockholm University Library, both libraries found at the Stockholm University. Other secondary sources used are articles, studies and previous research by other scholars and NGOs.

To collect the material used in the report a qualitative method has been used. The reason for choosing a qualitative approach is to get a deeper and broader understanding for the program. The Bolsa Família program is a social welfare program designed by the state to reduce poverty and inequality. Poverty itself is a complex and difficult issue to discuss due to the many different underlying and interrelated factors causing the problem. By using a qualitative method the aim is to find several possible perspectives and answers to my questions.

The report is constructed from a macro perspectival view. It starts with the concept of a welfare state and why many countries in Latin America have chosen to implement it. It is an important feature for the understanding of how the society and state has developed and functions, and is necessary to later be able to draw conclusions on the educational system since it is highly influenced by social and political policies.
When breaking down the different elements of the social welfare system, the system is to a large extent built upon cash transfers. One of the main sources used is a report from the World Bank "The Nuts and Bolts of Brazil’s Bolsa Familia Program: Implementing Conditional Cash Transfers in a Decentralized Context” by Lindert, Linder, Hobbs and de la Brière. The report gives a thorough and in-depth evaluation of the Bolsa Familia program. It describes and presents in detail all the different actors co-operating behind the complex program and every step of the cash transfer process is explained (Lindert 2007:1-5).

Secondly, the next step has been to try separating the different features of the conditional cash transfer system in order to focus on the educational aspect and performance of children in primary school in Brazil.

It is important to stress that I as a researcher to some extent influence the content and the selection of material in this report with my own experiences. As far as possible, authors and scholars from Latin America has been chosen in order to try to avoid a western perspective on the concept of the welfare state and education in Brazil. Some reports and articles from international organizations (e.g. United Nations, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and scholars (e.g. Lavinas 2006, de Brauw et al 2008) have also been included to raise some of the critique the Bolsa Familia program has faced.

1.5 Limitations

Due to a restriction of time, this study will not include all aspects of the Bolsa Familia program, i.e. pensions, health care, nutrition etc.

Despite the fact that some states in Brazil are characterized by more poverty, school enrollment is almost equally spread across the different regions in the country and the gaps are relatively small (World Bank 2010:5-8). Therefore will this paper not include a regional insight. Additionally, the paper will not contain a comparison between children living in rural or urban areas.

This study only aims to discuss the children of beneficiaries enrolled in the program, excluding homeless children, street children and other poor children in Brazil. Furthermore, a gender aspect within the children will not be included.
2. Theoretical approach

2.1 Definition of the welfare state

The welfare state could be defined as a state-led policy with the aim of securing at least a minimum of welfare to its citizens in the cases of unemployment, sickness, maternity and old age. Foremost, the state strives to enhance public investments in health and education provided via accumulation of human capital (Ferreira 2012:837-846).

2.2 The emergence of the welfare system

The emergence of the welfare system is a combination of both economical and political factors. The first welfare systems have evolved during a long period of time, back to the time after independence from Spain and Portugal. It was a top-bottom system, characterized and structured by class divisions such as race and occupation. The top-bottom social policy was a way to control labor movements and urban middle classes. The top belonged to powerful men within the military, church and large landowners, which were given pensions, whereas at the bottom of the hierarchy simple workers and slaves could be found. The state wanted to strengthen the loyalty of the elite. Workers (mostly working in the informal sector) were excluded from the social-insurance system. The welfare state has been formed by political elites who reformed social, economical and political policies in order to respond to the demands of a growing and more mobilized working class or as an action to prevent labor tensions (Segura-Ubiergo 2007:24-29).

2.3 Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI)

In Latin America, social policies have undergone several different stages. The countries in Latin America had severely been affected by three large crises, the two world wars and the great depression in the 1930s putting a lot of pressure on the financial system. The survival of many states in Latin America was dependent on export and import incomes. Since the economy of many countries was focused on only a few commodities they became vulnerable to small changes in the world market. With the stagnation of trade, the income sources for many states disappeared and a new policy needed to be implemented.
The ISI model emphasizes the importance of producing and selling commodities domestically, within the own country, which minimizes the dependence on other countries. The implementation of the ISI policy was an attempt of the state to quickly reduce the high rates of unemployment and poverty. Industries created through ISI became ineffective and could not compete in the world market. At the same time, social protection consisted of mostly pensions and a poorly developed health insurance in some cases, including foremost the private sector workers, military and civil servants. Coverage for the workers and the rest of the population was limited or barely existent. The economic sustainability was hard to maintain and inflation of the currency became more critical. New reforms were required and the states adopted neoliberalism (Gwynne & Kay 2004:1-19) (Ferreira 2012:839-40).

During the period between World War II and the late 1970s, the development strategy was heavily based on social policy and was called the pre-globalization period (1920-79). The social policy at that time consisted to a large extent of provision of subsidies for goods and services. While this mostly benefited the urban middle-income groups, the poor parts of the population were left outside of social policies (Ferreira 2012:839-40).

2.4 Neoliberalism

Even though neoliberalism was introduced in Latin America during the 20th century, it wasn’t until the 1980s when it was really implemented. The social assistance programs existing during that time were predominantly different forms of commodity subsidies (food or gas). Alongside with the debt crisis in the 1980s, social policy went through some changes once again. It was only after the crisis when states begin to consider a broader safety-net program to protect the poor (Ferreira 2012:839-841). The reason for why the state adopted a new type of policy was to try controlling the rising inflation, which was a serious problem in many countries. Another aspect that was targeted with the help of Neoliberalism was the large debts that needed to be paid and cutting down on budget deficits.

Governments had to cut down on public spending, which resulted in a decline in the overall spending per child, health care and education. The policy changes affected both the urban and rural poor, who lacked almost all forms of social protection. The workers had to deal with a lowering in real wages. The consequence of the new reform adopted in Latin America was that large state-owned companies were sold and privatized. With the deregulation of the trade
market and a liberalization of the trade- and financial market (in order to attract international capital), the import of cheap commodities from other countries began. The thought was that a competition within the market would generate in a long-term growth. Instead the locally produced commodities could not compete with the new imported mass-produced cheap commodities causing unemployment. The idea of neoliberalism was to move the economy from the public to the private sector because it was believed to result in a stronger economy and a higher productivity (Ibid:102-110).

The urban cities continued to grow as well as the gap between the rich and the poor and the unemployment rate, despite the predictions of a higher productivity, leading to an increasing proportion of poverty among the citizens. Working conditions deteriorated and many workers and poorer segments of the society lacked pensions and a social protection against illness, injuries or unemployment. Poverty and inequality affected a large part of the population and became major problems in many of the Latin American countries. The majority of the population was poor and was still excluded from social insurance benefits. The income distribution model was not proportional and the elite were the ones benefitting from the new neoliberal policy and became wealthier. A growing dissatisfaction within the population began to spread together with the poverty and rising inequalities (Piras 2004:18-21).

The system was not sustainable and led soon to an introduction of new social programs to protect the poor.

2.5 Neostructuralism

The neoliberalism is criticized by neostructuralists for its liberalized approach to the international market and for not dealing with the problems that derives with globalization and development. Neostructuralism refers to globalization as more complex and aspects such as economical, political and social factors should be taken into consideration. Neostructuralists have emphasized the importance of the role of the state when it comes to promoting development meaning that an improvement and a successful economical growth can only be achieved by long-term policies and a structured and more restricted view of trade. The state should have an active role in the policy-making. (Leiva 2008:xvii-xxi).
2.6 The development of the welfare state in Brazil

The welfare system has developed differently in all countries in Latin America. Brazil is considered to be one of the first Latin American countries to implement a social welfare law (already in 1923, railroad workers received small pensions). It wasn’t until during the authoritarian period of President Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945) in the 1930’s when the welfare system began to form and expand to include other groups of the society such as workers in banks, industry or commerce. What characterizes the origin of the Brazilian welfare system is the fact that it wasn’t a result of a mobilized and well-organized labor movement that put pressure on the government and demanding social benefits. The origin of the welfare system in Brazil is more associated with the state’s objective to control social conflicts and uphold a stable political system.

As a strategy to control the mobilization process of the labor movements, governmental elites permitted social insurance benefits to these groups. The social security system became an important political tool of power for Vargas dictatorship. The system divided the working class in different segments, which were controlled by the central government. This division excluded the poor working class in social policymaking regarding education, public health and housing. The welfare system that Vargas had managed to create didn’t undergo a lot of changes until the 1960s.

Brazil had a democratic period between 1945-1964. During this period the labor movement became increasingly dependent on the existing system of privileges, which were overseen by the state. Slowly unions started to demand social benefits. The workers found at the top of the division didn’t appreciate this, and they tried to defend the privileges they had inherited from the Vargas period but the distribution of social benefits were closely linked to electoral cycles. Brazil lacked a strong left-oriented political party that could support the welfare reforms. In 1964, the military came to power in Brazil. The new military government (1964-1985) started a process of welfare reforms with the goal of weakening the organized labor and labor representation within the social security system were stopped (Segura-Ubiergo 2007:62-65).

2.7 The welfare state today

Although the poor population was the target, the neostructuralism soon turned out to be ineffective due to its design and limited coverage. With some economic growth in the end of
the 1990s, many countries could now increase public spending and create social programs. In order to still compete with the liberalized global trade market, the demand for a higher productivity and suitable workers rose. This led to the launch of a new form of social program that allowed the poor and vulnerable population to make investments in human capital.

According to evaluations, the income support given to poor families through the conditional cash transfer programs have helped to relieve income insecurity by investments made in education and health services. Since the programs are relatively easy to implement, they have become very popular and widespread in Latin America. Moreover, politically the programs are often used due to the immediate impact on poverty that can be seen and the cost (usually only a few percentage points of the national GDP) (Vos 2012:755-757).

The role of the state has an important key role in promoting the social and economical well being of its citizens. With an unequal primary income distribution, the government could redistribute incomes by taxing a certain part of the population, and then transfer the money to another part in need. Comparing the availability of social insurance for workers or poor in the past, many countries today have succeed in creating a welfare system that distributes resources and includes a big part of the population (Ferreira 2012:837-846).

In the book "The Political Economy of the Welfare State in Latin America" the author argues that the welfare state has an effect on the income inequality and poverty rates since the policy is aimed to influence the long-term prospects of the economical growth with the help of the investments done in human capital through education and health care related conditionalities (Soares 2010:174) (Segura-Ubiérquez 2007:1-15). To qualify as a welfare state three features are important i) the state is responsible to provide an income guarantee that is sufficient for individuals and families to escape poverty ii) the social risks related to old age, sickness and unemployment must be alleviated or removed significantly iii) the state must provide all citizens with a certain range of social services. The first and second objective is being reached via cash transfers, helping the poor or at-risk people to still maintain an income. The last objective is reached through public health and educational systems of high quality. By time they have become regarded as a social right of citizenship in some States (Segura-Ubiérquez 2007:7).

With its high level of income inequality and poverty, it is argued that Brazil should not be called a welfare state. The large economic inequalities and low human development is a result
of unequal land distribution and a high population growth. Even if Brazil invests a lot of resources on the welfare system, the investments spent on basic welfare services are not enough (Segura-Ubiergo 2007:24-29).

The concept of a social welfare state is controversial. According to Schwartzman, this type of policies could stimulate poor peoples laziness and dependency to the state. The opponents have criticized the conditional cash transfer programs for increasing the poor households dependence, instead of trying to enhance their autonomy and responsibility. Contrary to the argument of laziness, a correlation can be seen between beneficiaries and work. Those receiving the cash transfers are the ones working more than high-income people. (Schwartzman 2005:14-24). The main reason behind this argument is that the programs lack so-called “exit-doors” meaning that there doesn’t exist any structured plan or strategy on how people can break the cycle of poverty and dependency that the monthly cash transfers creates (Lessa 2009:8, Lindert 2007:91). The opponents against this kind of social policy argues that the approach with conditional cash transfer programs does not deal with the underlying causes of high poverty rates and economic insecurity. Even though the increased spending on education would help poor children to raise their educational results, the federal economic policy also has to be able to generate sufficiently amount of employments for a future sustainable development. Social policies can’t alone change the economic environment causing poverty (Vos 2012:755-757).

The idea of a welfare state does not automatically mean that the state is succeeding in e.g. poverty reduction; provide access to health care and education and maintaining an income for its citizens. The level of success can have various outcomes depending on state. It only presumes that the state has an agenda with policies targeted to reach some of the goals (Segura-Ubiergo 2007:24).
3. Chapter 3

3.1 Introduction

As a tool for poverty alleviation, the conditional cash transfers have become increasingly popular in developing countries. Households that fulfill certain criteria or conditions are given cash transfers. Many evaluations have been done to demonstrate the effectiveness of the programs. This chapter will have a closer look at the different elements of conditional cash transfers and present an overview of the challenges.

3.2 Conditional cash transfers

De Brauw and Hoddinott argue that evaluations regarding the effectiveness of the conditional cash transfer programs seldom take into consideration what aspects of the programs make them successful. As a result of this little is known in regard of what importance the different components of the program have individually. Imposing conditions on the beneficiaries in the program could be good, both from a private and public perspective.

The authors define three main arguments for why the CCT programs are good from the public perspective. Firstly, the government might know better what kind of actions benefit the poor rather than the poor themselves. By conditioning transfers, the government can induce changes in the behavior of the beneficiaries.

Secondly, conditions could help the government overcoming information asymmetries. Beneficiaries may not always be informed and aware of health risks or diseases, and when public campaigns have failed to reach out to the poor segments of the population, the conditionings might help and motivate more people to take care of their health.

The final reason is political and economical. The performance and results (such as school attendance or health clinic use) of politicians and policymakers are constantly being evaluated. Through conditioning transfers that helps improve these indicators, the politicians and policymakers can provide results of accomplishments before any significant changes in the poverty reduction. This is a tool for them to stay in office.

CCTs may have some potential benefits from the private perspective. The conditioning helps to unify households with different priorities and disagreements regarding the allocation of resources. There exist eligible persons standing outside the program, with the fear of
becoming dependent on the State. Foremost, conditioning could overcome the stigma effect that is otherwise often associated with welfare programs. Since the transfers are attached with a conditioning it might help the beneficiaries to legitimize the transfer (de Brauw & Hoddinott 2008:1-3) (Lessa 2009:13).

The two objectives of a conditional cash transfer program such as Bolsa Família are: i) reducing poverty and ii) break the inter-generational cycle of poverty. The first objective will be reached through cash transfers and the latter through conditionalities within education and health (Lessa 2009:3). Many scholars have distinguished one of the reasons for the fall of inequality to be social programs like the Bolsa Família. The program has come to represent a relatively important part of the total income for many poor Brazilians. For households living in the lower quintile, the cash transfers are a complement to their low- or non-existent salaries. Even if the cash transfers are a sort of financial relief, the amount of money is not sufficient to remove the households from the poverty condition (Ibid:5).

To break free from extreme poverty the people need to have a decent income. Therefore the population needs education. With the existing unequal income redistribution in Brazil it would take a long time for the economy to grow without the help of conditional cash transfer programs (Schwartzman 2005:24).

3.3 Bolsa Família program

To get governments to make new investments in the human capital to reduce poverty is not always easy. What the best method for poverty alleviation is can differ depending on the government. The concept of conditional cash transfers has been widely spread throughout Latin America. It was first during the late 1980s and early 1990s that CCTs appeared in Brazilian debates. It wasn’t until 1995, when two Brazilian municipalities decided to begin implementing the first CCT programs. The results of the CCT programs turned out to be positive. The programs quickly became popular, therefore in 1998; the federal government in Brazil began to co-finance other municipalities struggling with limited resources. The aim was to expand the program and strengthen its sustainability, primarily in the poorest regions (Lindert 2007:10-15).

These programs were the start, of what later would become four major social welfare programs in Brazil. 1) The federal *Bolsa Escola* program, had the objectives of reducing child
labor, increase educational attainment etc. 2) *Bolsa Alimentação*, the objective was to reduce infant mortality and nutritional deficiencies. Families would have access to adequate nutrition. 3) *Auxílio Gás*, a monetary transfers to provide households with cooking gas. 4) *Fome Zero*, the mission was to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Even if there were four separate CCT programs, they targeted almost the same families. In 2003, under the administration of President Luis Inácio ”Lula” da Silva, the programs were unified into one social welfare program, *Bolsa Família* (Ibid).

The monthly cash transfers are preferably given to the woman in the household, because it is believed that the changes are bigger that they will spend the money on the children. The state provides four different types of transfers. The amount of the cash transfers varies depending on the number of children\(^1\) and income. For the extremely poor households (income per capita of R$70 or less), a monthly *basic transfer* of R$70 is given regardless of the composition of the household (Soares 2010:174). A *variable transfer* is given to households in poverty and extreme poverty (income per capita up to R$140), including children in the age between 0 to 15 years old and pregnant women (R$38 per beneficiary, maximum of three grants per family). The *variable transfer for youth* covers adolescents in households eligible or beneficiaries of the Bolsa Família (R$38 per adolescent, maximum of two grants per family). Finally, an *extraordinary variable transfer* is given as a complementary transfer is given to compensate losses in income resulting from Bolsa Família replacing previous programs (the given grant vary from case to case)\(^2\).

Previously the program covered children to the age of 15 years. With a new law proposal in 2008, president “Lula” managed to change the age limit so the program came to include children and adolescents to the age of 17 years\(^3\). The program does not cover special remedial or recovery course program, but only public schools. For children coming from socially deprived families might to a higher degree need more help in school to not fall behind. In order to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty, investments in schooling and health for children are crucial. With the help of new distribution channels, such as ATM cards

\(^{1}\) Cash transfers are given up to a maximum of three children.


\(^{3}\) Website of the Brazilian Government: http://www.fomezero.gov.br/noticias/medida-provisoria-estende-bolsa-familia-a-jovens-de-16-e-17-anos-de-idade/
for poor families who never previously had a bank account, the Bolsa Familia program could target and reach out to more people (World bank 2010:18).

3.3.1 Targeting

The targeting accuracy of the beneficiaries included in program has been widely discussed and debated. Opponents of the program are further claiming that the program is ineffective due to leakages (people who unduly benefit from the program) and the high expenditure costs. Instead, the resources would be more profitable if they were focused on expanding and improving the public school education (Lessa 2009:8, 18). Another reason for why the Bolsa Familia program is believed to have targeting issues is the fact that the poorest people are the hardest to reach. The poor people are often lacking information about their rights and how to apply for the program.

A different approach is the registration of potential beneficiaries due to wrongly declared income to local governments or errors in the register of beneficiaries (Lessa 2009:12). The program uses self-declared incomes to determine eligibility of potential beneficiaries and this is criticized to be an incentive in order to benefit from the cash transfers provided by the program (Soares 2010:174).

Unlike other conditional cash transfer programs in Latin America, the Brazilian Bolsa Familia program lacks the same targeting efficiency and accuracy that can be found in other countries. However, other conditional cash transfer programs does not cover as many households as the Bolsa Familia program does. Taking both the number of households covered and the targeting performance into account, the Bolsa Familia program is considered to be one of the best conditional cash transfer programs. With a less extensive program, the risk for inclusion errors would be minimized. On the other hand, with an expansion of the program the chances are that non-eligible people will benefit from the program. Since the cash transfers have a large impact on the total income for many households, they have come to reduce inequality, poverty and particularly extreme poverty. Conditional cash transfer programs are argued to have an inconsiderable impact on poverty if the program is small.

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4 Other conditional cash transfers equivalent to the Brazilian Bolsa Familia program are amongst others; “Oportunidades” in Mexico, “Chile Solidario” in Chile, “Bono Solidario” in Ecuador and “Familias en Acción” in Colombia.
scaled and does not reach out to many poor households. An implementation of a constant monitoring of the targeting could minimize the risk of excluding potential beneficiaries (Soares 2010:177-185) (Lessa 2009:11).

3.3.2 Political difficulties

Despite the fact that the Brazilian education policy (Article 8) states that the Federal District, the states and the municipalities together should both organize and collaborate their education systems, in practice it is not that simple (LAW education). The Bolsa Família is facing some political difficulties. Since the Federal or local government are unable to monitor or administer all poor households in Brazil, the program have to a large extent being built upon a decentralized structure. A large extent of the program is managed at a federal level, but many aspects are still carried out by several other actors at local level e.g. the 5,564 different Brazilian municipalities.

The responsibility of the municipalities is important and includes foremost registration of potential beneficiaries, the application process and monitoring of the education conditionalties. The difficulty is the autonomy of the municipalities, which gives each municipality a significantly different administrative and financial capacity to implement the program (Lindert 2007:7-25). Political parties and movements could use the local community or grass root movements to develop their own agenda (Schwartzman 2005:25) The risk of political patronage becomes questioned with a decentralized structure as in the case of Brazil meaning that individuals would be benefited from the cash transfers in the program, in exchange to their political or electoral support (Soares 2010:176).

The state and the local municipalities support primary and secondary education. However, the resources of the State are important when it comes to implementation of different programs, school lunches and books, and providing funds to states with limited resources (Schwartzman 2005:3). In her article, scholar Celia Lessa Kerstenetzky, defines a political factor that could affect the redistributive policy in Brazil. It is important that the Government and the policy has the support of the middle and upper class since the social welfare programs are heavily financed by the taxes they pay. With a downfall in public educational quality, the segregation in the society becomes more visible. A segregated society is more likely to have recurrent social exclusion problems. Schools with students of mixed background tend to have better influence on the school performance of children from poor households. The sharing of same
spaces and a daily contact could help to decrease the existing discrimination and inequality in Brazil (Lessa 2009:20).

Children themselves do not have a political voice or direct representation in the government as voters do. Their direct interests and well being together with their educational opportunities are dependent on the caretakers and the role of the state. Engaging and participating in civic life and be politically active requires a lot of time. Social policies, like conditional cash transfers have the largest impact on poor households. Yet, poor people or households often have little opportunity to participate in the making of decisions due to a lack of time (several works, single parenting) (Kamerman 2010:81-82).

3.4 Summary

Conditional cash transfers, such as the Bolsa Família program, are designed to both alleviate short- and long term poverty via cash transfers in exchange to some conditionalities. However, the programs targeting and effectiveness is discussed. Little is known about what components of the program makes it successful which makes it hard to improve it. Another reason for why it’s been hard to oversee the program is because of its decentralized character. The targeting performance is questioned because of the accuracy of the beneficiaries. A lot of non-eligible people are believed to be included in the program, whereas the very poor people, in real need of the program are harder to target and therefore remains outside of it.

4. Chapter 4

4.1 Introduction

Inadequate or total lack of education is considered by the United Nations (UN) to be one of the main obstacles in defeating poverty and improving people’s lives. Without education the opportunity for social and economical advancement is small. Therefore, in 2000, the United Nations agreed on 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDG)
The goals of the declaration represent human needs and basic human rights and include amongst others freedom from hunger and extreme poverty and right to quality education. The second paragraph of the eight MDG emphasizes the importance of achieving universal primary education (MDG by the United Nations 2010:3-5).

"Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling” (MDG by the United Nation 2010:16).

4.2 Education policy

The shift of the Brazilian education policy slowly started with president Fernando Henrique Cardoso and his government in 1995. The government carried out three critical changes at the federal level that would change education.

• The first step was a reform (FUNDEF – Fundo de Desenvolvimento do Ensino Fundamental) that would equalize funding across regions, states and municipalities.
• Second, a national yardstick was implemented to measure the learning of all children
• Finally, the educational opportunity of students from poor families were protected with the help of Bolsa Familia and a comprehensive legal framework regarding basic education (Lei e Diretrizes de Bases in 1996) had for the first time being developed (World Bank 2010:3)

The National Education Bases and Guidelines Law (Lei e Diretrizes de Bases, Lei 994/96) from 1996 are still in force today. The following paragraphs are a selection of guidelines regarding primary education;

Article 3 states the guidelines for how teaching will be conducted. The article emphasizes the importance of equal conditions for all children to access school. Furthermore, improving the school education, ensure the quality and coexistence of both private and public schools are other key guidelines.

\[\text{In 2000, 189 nations agreed on eight Millenium Development Goals to accomplish by 2015 including: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combar HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development.}\]
Article 4 presents the State’s duty to public school. The State must ensure that public primary school education is mandatory and free of charge regardless if the child has not previously had access to it at the proper age. The State should also ensure a minimum standard of the educational quality meaning that there must exist a variety and a quantity minimum of supplies helping the student with development of the learning process.

Article 5 emphasizes the fundamental public right for all citizens to have access to education. The Government’s first priority is to ensure access to compulsory education.

Article 6 states the obligation of parents or guardians to register minors in school. As seen above, the state should have an active role in almost all aspects of a child’s education according to the law and guidelines existing in Brazil.

4.3 Education and children

Historically speaking, Brazil has, and still is considered to be one of the most unequally distributed countries in the world. The number of people classified as poor or very poor exceeds the total population in many countries. Many studies have been made to evaluate the effect of the Bolsa Família program on school attendance, drop out, child labor and educational performance. The expansion and increase of students enrolled in school has helped to improve income equality. One of the largest underlying factors for this is due to more progressive governmental policies, which includes the conditional cash transfers to low-income families (World Bank 2010:35).

According to the report by the World Bank, research in the education area has shown that for a future economical growth, the importance lies in what the students learn and not the amount of years they spend in completing school.

Some scholars believe that the underlying issues with school attainment of children coming from poor households are a more complex problem. The importance of access to school or cash transfers to households diminish. The real problem lies in social issues (drug-gang involvement or teen pregnancy), family insecurity (domestic violence, homelessness, unemployment) and learning issues (Ibid:23-39).

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6 Website of the Brazilian Government  http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/L9394.htm
Education increases the child’s probability for a future economical success. All expansions made in the public system should also include investment of resources in the already existing systems in order to improve the quality of education (Lessa 2009:19). The idea of the conditionalities in the Bolsa Família program is that they will work as a way out of poverty for future generations. The conditionalities promotes contact with public social services, which makes it important that the services provided for the beneficiaries are of good quality and available (Ibid:14).

It is argued that the Bolsa Familia makes the biggest difference for children between the age of 5 to 6 and 14 to 17. The impact on children in the age of 7-13 years is very small since basic primary education is mandatory almost in all countries and therefore a small transfer of money would not have a significant influence on school enrollment since the parents would keep their children in school anyway regardless of the cash transfer. When young adolescents reach the age of 14, they begin to drop out of school for different reasons. Today the resources are mainly focused on the students between 7-13 years, whereas the largest emphasis should be put on the high-risk group of children dropping out or bring back students that have recently dropped out of school (Schwartzman 2005:6-10, 20-23).

Education is one of the basic needs of children and it deserves a lot of attention (Kamerman 2010:15). No child should be excluded regarding his/hers economical background (United Nations Convention Article 2). Several evaluations made conclude that since its launch, the program has had a positive impact and increased school enrollment, school attendance and lowered the drop out rates. Some indications show that despite these results, children enrolled in the program have a lower educational performance than children outside of it (Lessa 2009:9-15).

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) collects information about a variety of topics. One of their goals is to help governments to combat poverty through economic and financial stability. They have compared the school performance in over 50 showing that Brazil occupies one of the last positions⁷.

⁷ Website of (OECD) Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
http://www.oecd.org/education/
4.4 Statistical data

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) collects information about a variety of topics, cultural and economical backgrounds. The aim of the international study is to evaluate education performances of students in basic subjects such as reading, mathematics and science and is conducted every third year since the start in year 2000. One of their goals is to help governments to combat poverty through economic and financial stability. There are two reasons for including number from a study by the OECD. Firstly, it provides a better understanding of how the Brazilian students perform from an international perspective and level. Secondly, very few studies are frequently conducted to measure school performances in Brazil.

About two thirds of all students taking the test across the participating countries score between 400-600 points. As seen in table 1.1 the Brazilian students barely qualifies to reach a score over 400 points. Little less the scores are significantly below the average results of other OECD countries. The latest numbers from 2009 comparing school performance in 65 countries shows that Brazil occupies one of the last positions (position 54 out of 65) whereas other countries that also has implemented conditional cash transfers rank higher (Chile position 42 and Mexico 48). The scores for Brazil remains fairly unchanged since the implementation of the Bolsa Familis program.

Table 1.1 School performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>OECD Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>530</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Programme for International Student Assessment 2000-2009

Table 1.2 shows the total percentage of students enrolled in primary school. Since the launch of the Bolsa Família in 2003, the number of enrolled children has increased. The collection of data makes it hard due to the decentralized structure of the program. The statistics are dependent on the different municipalities who collect the data (Lindert 2007). Despite the fact that primary education is compulsory, not all children in Brazil are enrolled in school. Children in urban areas are somewhat more likely to attend than children living in rural areas. As seen in table 1.2 the conditional character of the Bolsa Família program could be the reason for the increase in school enrollment. The positive numbers for school enrollment during the past 15 years is not related to initial access to primary school. However, the greatest change lies in the share of students who complete primary education and stay in school through secondary education (World Bank 2010:30).

Table 1.2 School enrollment, primary education

![Graph showing school enrollment percentages from 2002 to 2008]

Source: Official website of the Brazilian Government

4.5 Quantity / Quality

With a projected higher integration in the world economy, Brazil is highly dependent on the educational system in order to build a national unity and a future labor force capable of competing with international standards. The World Bank has in their report, *Achieving World Class Education in Brazil*, differentiated three key variables to measure education systems: i) how efficient labor force skills are for the development of a sustainable economic growth, ii) how well the educational opportunities contribute to reduce poverty and inequality, iii) education results.
Research done in the field of education shows evidence that the amount of completed years in school is not essential, but what students actually learn in school. Therefore should school performance measurements strive towards global comparisons and little to national standards (World Bank 2010:23-25). However, there are some discussions about the average daily time spent in school. Brazilian students spend an average 4,2 hours each day in primary school, which makes their school days one of the shortest in the world. It is argued to be one of the problems for the low educational results for Brazilian students (Lessa 2009:14-19) Despite the fact that Brazil has succeeded in improving the education results and the Bolsa Família program has had a positive impact on the school attendance as well as drop-outs the country is still lagging behind and is far from the average learning level internationally. Even with the largest conditional cash transfer program, Brazil is not leader in education within Latin America (World Bank 2010:23-25) (Soares 2010:186).

Many scholars and researcher agree on the fact that the foundation of a welfare state is education. Education is an essential key factor for increasing the children’s probability of succeeding economically in the future. School performance in Brazil has been strongly connected to the socio-economic situation and conditions of the family (Lessa 2009:1-19, Schwartzman 2005:15). Children coming from poor families are to a higher grade facing problems with lower education results and are more likely of failing to advance in school (World Bank 2010:7) (Soares 2010:182).

The social services and the schools are often unprepared or lack the resources to deal with difficult students or children from economically deprived families. It’s unlikely that the future generation will be able to have their emancipation from poverty if the schools are continuing to be unprepared. The learning performance and quality of school available to children from poor households is in general lower than the schools located in high-income areas or high-fee private schools.

Since a good quality education is expensive in Brazil, a large part of the population do not have any other options than to let their children attend public schools. Unlike the private schools, many of the public ones are often overcrowded, inadequate when it comes to material, facing infrastructural problems or they are at times under financed. The public schools are responsible for educating almost all children coming from poor households (Lessa 2009:1-19, Schwartzman 2005:15-23).

With the expansion of the Bolsa Família program, the quality of education has been
questioned. Some indicators show that there has been some loss in the quality. The middle class has increasingly opted to let their children get an education at a private school. The segmentation increases causing a worsening in social inequalities and an additional loss in the quality of education (Lessa 2009:14).

In the Millennium Development Goals report by the United Nations the lack of teachers is questioned and problematized. To achieve and meet the goals for 2015, Brazil has to ensure that there are enough teachers and classrooms to meet the demands (UN 17). According to the report by the World Bank, one of the most difficult challenges for a sustainable good quality education in the future is the teacher. Teaching has during a long time being regarded as a low-status profession in Brazil. The wages have been very low and the training of teachers has been inadequate. To raise the teacher quality in Brazil, it is necessary to attract people with a high academic background. As a step to raise the quality of teachers, the federal government and some state and local governments have implemented teacher bonus (pay for performance) (World Bank 2010:8-9) (Lessa 2009:14).

Brazil has previously tried to assess the problem of school quality. In 1998 the Brazilian government together with the support of the World Bank invested a lot of funds and resources in a program called Fundescola. The aim of the program was to improve the education quality, mainly in rural areas and in very poor states. Since the start of the Fundescola program the focus and investments of the government and international actors has shifted to preferably support cash transfer programs such as the Bolsa Família. The effects and results of improving school education are hard to measure and require a long-term evaluation, leading to a loss of interest of the policymakers (Schwartzman 2005:23-24).

4.5.1 Teacher Training and Qualification

The teacher quality and effectiveness can also vary significantly within the same school both in private and public schools.

What has remained as a culture belief in Brazil is the belief among some teachers that children from poor households cannot learn (World Bank 2010:40). Teachers have at times been unwilling to report absence in school to the authorities, in order for the poor families not to lose their monthly cash transfer. This complicates the evaluations of the program (Schwartzman 2005:4).
The performance gaps between primary education in Brazil and other Latin American countries are slowly closing and Brazilian students have made some substantial progress in education in international tests. The results in the progress is due to many factors e.g. new innovations in Brazilian education policy, education finance equalization, results measurement and conditional cash transfers that increased the school attainment of children from poor families (World Bank 2010:14).

The first crucial step for the Bolsa Família program is getting children into school. In order to receive the full benefits of education, the children must remain and continue to attend classes preventing children from dropping out before reaching the final grade. This argument was confirmed by Schwartzman who concluded that one of the most important features of the Bolsa Família program is to keep the children in school (UN 2010:17) (Schwartzman 2005:10).

4.6 Summary

Despite the fact that international laws and the Brazilian educational laws and policy state equal access to education and equal rights and opportunities for all children, it does not mean that the laws are implemented in reality. Results show a positive result in dropouts and school enrollment but very little can be said about the actual development in school results and performances within Brazil. Overall, the quality of education is questioned and more resources need to be invested for improvements.

5. Final comments and conclusion

This paper has had two objectives. The first one has had the aim is to study the relation between the states political evolvement and social policies. The second objective was to study how well the Bolsa Família program has succeeded in education outcomes.

What is the State’s role in relation to the launch of the Bolsa Família program?

As the history in Latin America has shown, the role of the state has changed during the years. Both economical and political interests, has lead the welfare politic through different paths
and directions. The main challenges have never been whether or not poverty and inequality should be reduced, but how it would be reduced. It has always been in the best interest of the state to have a strong and stable economy as promoting the well being of the population. In order to reduce or completely break the cycle of poverty more resources needs to be invested in basic social services such as education, health care and retirement.

During the history of Brazil, the country has lacked strong left-wing parties. Left-wing parties are often associated with the development of the welfare state since they are closely linked to labor unions, which in turn help the working class to mobilize. The role of the state has influenced the process of developing a welfare state in Brazil. It started to emerge and form during a period of time when the economic conditions in Brazil were relatively favorable. While other countries in Latin America were severely affected by the financial crises in the world, the economy of Brazil was quite closed and promoted the ISI model. During this period, the country was under the authoritarian rule of President Getúlio Vargas in the 1930s. He and the state were eager to uphold a stable political system. The easiest way to achieve this was by giving some social benefits to the workers. Although the workers had some benefits, the power was still in the hands of the president, state and elite. Despite the fact that the rule in Brazil was classified as democratic during 1946-63, it can be questioned whether or not the country was truly democratic and how that affected the social policies. The government and military still had an influence over the regime and who would become elected as a president. It could be argued that the impact of the military has in fact prevented a bottom-up pressure on the state.

Especially in the 1930s in Latin America, a high level of trade openness could at this time result in both insecurity and inequalities within a country. With an unstable international market, the workers in countries with a high level of trade openness were more likely to lose their jobs. When large parts of the population are unemployed, the chances are greater for mobilization. The workers can mobilize through trade unions or political parties to pressure the government for compensation and more benefits. Brazil implemented the ISI model early, which promoted domestic production and trade, leading to economic development. However, this model did mainly favor the middle-class and workers in the formal sector since they were better organized.
With the end of the military rule in 1985, Brazil became democratic once again. Today Brazil has a democratically elected president. With democracy come also greater opportunities for certain groups of the population to political participation. Social movements, trade unions and other associations are now free to mobilize and pressure the government for expanding social securities. As a result, the elected leaders have to rely on the popular vote. The leaders also have to a higher degree meet the demands of the people e.g. social benefits or improvements in social welfare.

President Lula (elected as a president in 2002, and re-elected in 2006) was seen as a representative of the workers and the poor. It is likely that this attribute was the reason why he gained and retained his power. The poor people and the workers constitute a large number of the population, which makes the leaders highly dependent on their votes. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the Bolsa Família was one the main priorities of president Lula to implement.

The role of the state in Bolsa Família and other conditional cash transfer program could be analyzed from two perspectives. Either the state takes upon the role to alleviate and ease the poverty or striving towards emancipation from it. As Soares points out, to have some kind of an impact on the poverty reduction the program would have to be large scaled and includes a lot of people (Soares 2010). Without having a well-structured plan for the future or further investments of resources in social services or inclusion of the society is it likely that the rate of beneficiaries will remain growing. A considerable amount of the state’s resources would continuously have to be redistributed the poor people just to maintain them out of extreme poverty or above the poverty line.

Historically, there has almost always existed segregation in the society (Piras 2004). Even with a wealthy elite, the state cannot function without workers. All social classes are interrelated and dependent on one on other. The second objective, striving towards emancipation from poverty, would require more engagement from all levels of the society than the first objective. In this case the welfare system must expand and improve its quality. To improve the quality in social services and expand, conditional cash transfer systems, including the Bolsa Familia, would need a strong support from the middle class. This objective demands more investments of resources, which could be difficult for the state
to provide without new tax reforms. As the World Bank and other scholars already have established, Brazil is considered to be one of the most unequally distributed countries in the world (World Bank 2010).

The elite in Brazil only covers a small percentage of the population but owns almost all of the land and resources, whereas the proportion poor and very poor people are extremely large. The elite has a strong position in the country and their interests have many times lead to social reforms. An example of this is when the state has wanted to strengthen the loyalty of the elite allowing political elites have had the power to make reforms in respond to the demands of the working class (Segura-Ubiergo 2007). This large proportion of people does not generate taxes sufficient to support the whole state. Therefore, the state and the poor people are highly dependent on the elite, the middle class and the taxes they pay.

The role of the state has been extremely important to the launch of the Bolsa Família program. The question remains thus for how long Brazil will be able to compete with international standards? A government that is reliant on safety nets like conditional cash transfers, as a fundamental element of its social policy is worrisome.

It is important for Brazil to find a sustainable and long-term policy and safety-net system. So far the country has been both dependent and affected by the globalization and the world economy. It is especially important in the case of Brazil since it is one of the leading economies today. A downfall or a crisis in the Brazilian economy could potentially spread and hurt the whole region by having international investors pulling out their resources.

Since it is easy to present results to the media and the public showing the positive outcomes in reduction of poverty and educational results, the program becomes a powerful political tool of the state, in order to gain votes or electoral support. The risk for clientelism becomes high (Soares 2010). The households cannot afford opposing to the current policy system, with the chances of risking the monetary benefits they are receiving today.

**How has the implementation of the Bolsa Família program affected the educational development of children in primary school?**

When reading previous research and evaluation about the effects of the Bolsa Família on the educational development very little can be found even if scholars are unanimous when they
write that the program has positive results on dropouts and school enrollment and attendance. However, it is not clear what aspects or elements of the program that makes it successful. The answers to the initial research question would at first sight simply be; the program has managed to decrease dropouts and enhanced the school enrollment.

The biggest effects on educational development are hard to measure since they occur in the home environment of the children. The children of the poor families benefiting from the program are likely to come from a household where they are frequently or occasionally exposed to different kinds of insecurities. Most likely it is socio-economic insecurity since the beneficiaries have a low-income job or lacks employment. By helping and providing households with monthly cash transfers for basic needs for food, water, gas etc. the Bolsa Família program creates a more stable household that minimizes the chances for children to feel insecurity or stress in their home environment. Children coming from socially and economically deprived families and areas are more often in contact or exposed to drugs, violence and abuse. Considering the fact that probably, their parents are low educated, the conditions for the children coming from poor families are not favorable. The programs possibility to impact children is quite limited to school hours. However, by promoting a secure and financially more stable home environment, the children are less likely exposed to child labor or participating in non-paid household work (cooking, cleaning, taking care of younger siblings). This allows the children to fully focus on their educational results and performances.

Looking deeper at the aim of the program, which is long-term investments in human accumulation, the answer would be that the state has not reached its goal yet. When analyzing evaluations regarding the Bolsa Família program, very little can be distinguished concerning the affects on educational development and results. What can be established is that children in families enrolled in program have a higher possibility to succeed in school than children in non-treated families. The largest differences are of behavioral impact such as (the above-mentioned) increase in school enrollment, attendance and lowered dropout rates. The reason for this is the conditional character of the program. One solution to enhance the educational results could be to extend the conditionalities to also include a minimum requirement of approved results in basic subjects for students.

Different conclusions could be drawn on why the program hasn’t succeeded in reaching its
One of the main problems with the program is that clear objectives and a time frame are lacking which makes it less efficient. Comparing to for example the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG by the United Nations 2010:1-5) they have targeted the main world problems and thereafter presented all the potential challenges for achieving the goal. A clear time frame has been set. Every region has its own individual goals and the progress is well monitored and followed. Unlike the goals of the United Nations, the Bolsa Familia program has no real time frame for how long it will take the state to help the population out of poverty and extreme poverty. More importantly, the program has not differentiated the underlying problems in a clear way. With an aim of lowering poverty and inequality, the different factors causing them must first be distinguished. Otherwise the state will continuously spend a part of the budget on a problem that still keeps evolving. By distinguishing the causes for poverty and inequality the state can continue and address the different problem areas. Does the problem lie in non-favorable working conditions, discrimination in the labor market, corruption within the government etc.? The investments in education development or teacher quality will be of no use if there e.g. isn’t enough jobs when the students graduate eventually. If not, they will become unemployed and rely on some sort of social security net or program to survive and they will be back in poverty. Even if the program focuses on several aspects, the education is the main focus. The state must be able to provide a realistic plan for the population in all ages, not only during the childhood or time spent in school.

Another difficulty is the monitoring of results. The main parameters used for evaluation the educational development of children are school enrollment and dropouts. These parameters are not enough to determine whether or not the program has had a successful impact on children’s educational development. The state should reconsider to some parameters focusing on school results in the program. According to the study of OECD (2009), Brazilian students have one of the lowest performing results in an international comparison of more than 50 selected countries. This means that not only should the program strive against implementing a parameter monitoring the educational results, but it should also be done in an international context. If the program relies on measuring improvements in educational results only within the own country, Brazil will likely not be able to compete on an international level. A hinder for this is the structure of the program.
As described earlier, the program is based on a decentralized structure. Where a lot of the responsibility lies on the different municipals in Brazil (Lindert 2007). If the program lacks a well functioning monitoring system that collects the data nationwide, it will be difficult to measure the results.

By having a well-functioning monitoring system, the program could be more efficient in reaching its goals. With a big country like Brazil, the income distribution is not equally spread. With a monitoring system different individual goals within regions could be implemented since the conditions vary. The chance for dependency on the state increases without any well-structured and long-term plan on how to get autonomous.

A strong educational foundation is the base for the chances of breaking the cycle of poverty. Despite the fact that evaluations of the program show positive results on school attendance and dropout rates it is not enough to help the children out of poverty. One crucial factor for educational development is the quality of education and teachers. The school institution plays an important role, which makes the maintenance of a high standard critical.

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