

EQUIVALENCE

St. Paul's School and the Brazilian Education system

February 2014

From the Headmaster

The issue of Equivalence has been raised again since the change in the Law (Brazilian) has involved an alteration in the age correlation between St. Paul's and the majority of Brazilian schools.

The tradition of St. Paul's School as a British School has been sustained over more than 80 years and the culture and dynamic of the School is very much rooted in its British origins. Pupils and students have the opportunity to study for international qualifications (IGCSEs and the IB Diploma) and many parents choose St. Paul's for their child's education because of the opportunities it opens up for students when they leave; we have students entering the best universities in the world because of the academic success they achieve and the high regard that the IB Diploma holds in academic establishments worldwide.

Of course, St. Paul's is a British School and a Brazilian School and students also have the opportunity to study both for the Ensino Fundamental and the Ensino Médio. This academic base allows students to enter Brazilian universities and several students choose this option; we are delighted that those who at the moment carry right through to complete the IB Diploma find themselves well placed to enter the best universities here in São Paulo.

There was a Federal Law passed in 2001 which framed a National Educational Plan and within this was the stated intention to extend the Ensino Fundamental to nine years, whereas previously it had been eight. This was made operative in 2006. A stipulation of the Law was that children must be six during their 1^o ano. In order to comply with this Law, many Brazilian schools made the last year of their Educação Infantil the 1^o ano do Ensino Fundamental; in other words, they 'added' the extra year on at the start; not all private Brazilian schools did this.

In order to embrace this change in 2006, (and in the spirit of what the law intended) St. Paul's chose to align itself with the Brazilian system in such a way that 1^o ano would begin in Prep 1 and an additional year (9^o ano) was added to the Brazilian curriculum. The strong belief in the School is that the early years of education are of crucial benefit to children and we did not want to put in place a system that would shorten or limit the early years programme. All the research amongst psychologists and neuroscientists points to the importance of active, creative and outdoor play activities for young children since these are vital for the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of children. An earlier start to a more formal

programme is not supported by educational research; children who have a rich, high quality pre-school education consistently achieve better educational results and display higher levels of wellbeing. For this reason the School retained what in effect is three years of 'Infantil' (early childhood) education.

However, the change to a 12 year cycle (combined Ensino Fundamental and Ensino Médio) meant that while previously the students at the top of the school could receive their Ensino Médio at the end of the Lower Sixth, following the change, they will now have to stay until the end of the Upper Sixth to fulfil the statutory 12 years. Because this was put in place in 2006, it is now the current Form 3 pupils who will be first affected by this change; they will start the new 9º ano Ensino fundamental in 2014/2015 and they will graduate with their Ensino Médio in 2017/2018. (The pupils who are currently in Form 4 and the year groups above will still be receiving their Ensino Médio at the end of the Lower Sixth).

In effect, this means that while the students of St. Paul's were previously receiving their 'Ensino Médio' on average about six months before their 'Brazilian counterparts', in future (from 2018) they will be receiving it on average about six months later. Of course, if they aim to study the IB Diploma and stay to the end of the Upper 6th anyway, this will make no difference at all to when they complete their education. One of the consequences of this is that the School is looking closely at the future programme that the Sixth Form will follow. We will make appropriate changes to the curriculum and ensure not only that we maintain the high quality of our IB Diploma Programme, but also a high quality Brazilian programme which may be more directed at the demands of the Vestibular.

If you have concerns and wish to discuss this further I would be very happy to meet with you. Do make an appointment with me through my PA Moira: mjc@stpauls.br.

Crispin Rowe