

## 4.4 Million Brazilians Are in College, a 27% Jump

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According to a new study, the Gains of Education on the Labor Market, higher education in Brazil grew 27% between 2001 and 2003. This increase was driven by private institutions.

The study, released Wednesday, November 9, by the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV), informs that three-quarters of the 4.4 million people who partake of higher education in Brazil are enrolled in private universities.

According to the economist Marcelo Néri, coordinator of the study and of the FGV's Center of Social Policies, "education begets education, because it is a dynamic process."

In this sense, he emphasizes the importance not only of the quantity of resources allocated to education, "but the quality of these resources as well."

The effects of higher education on the labor market are, in his view, the fruit of a series of decisions made over the entire course of a student's school career.

He said that parents' education is, therefore, a decisive factor in their children's education. "There are poverty traps that are perpetuated in this process," Néri observed.

Thus, in his opinion, the importance of the State as an agent in the process of fomenting education, especially the education of young children between the ages of zero and six.

"This is where 'the playing field of individuals' with different historical family backgrounds is leveled."

Néri reiterates, however, that entry into the university brings gains for those who enter the labor market. For this reason, he says, "there is perhaps not so big a need for government-supported public universities in the country."

Néri is not worried about the growth of private universities. "What could worry me is the drop in the quality of higher education."

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