

YOUTH, WORK AND EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: OPEN FUTURES

CÉLIO DA CUNHA

celio.cunha@brturbo.com.br | Universidade Católica de Brasília & Universidade Federal de Brasília, Brazil

RANILCE GUIMARÃES-LOSIF

ranilceguimaraes@yahoo.com.br | Universidade Católica de Brasília, Brazil & University of Alberta, Canada

ABSTRACT

This article examines the relationship between youth, work and education in Brazil. It is viewed against the backdrop of the recent mass protests calling for better living conditions, in which young people played a leading role. The paper takes a look at various aspects of youth at a time of uncertainty and growing competitiveness, where challenges are ever greater and where the need for young people to master new skills and abilities is paramount. After discussing the constraints and prospects of the Brazilian educational situation, as well as some of the public policies directed to the youth sector, the article concludes that despite significant strides in the educational sphere, much remains to be done for the youth of Brazil.

KEY WORDS

Labour; Employment and education; Youth unemployment in Brazil.



SISYPHUS

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2,

2013, 230-258

Youth, Work and Education in Brazil: Open Futures

Célio da Cunha | Ranilce Guimarães-Iosif

INTRODUCTION

The recent demonstrations that erupted in the streets of many cities in Brazil highlighted the discontent felt by young people over the limited effects government policies have had on their lives. Importantly, the protests also sent out an unequivocal message that the active exercise of citizenship can contribute to strengthening democracy. As in certain Arab, Latin American and European countries, Brazilian youth employed the new tools of mass communication to organize collectively and to register the importance of their role in the struggle for the social changes needed to improve their working conditions, education, health, security and other aspects of their social rights. Given this scenario, the main purpose of this article is to discuss current issues that have a bearing on the situation of youth in Brazil. Therefore it focuses particularly on the youth employment crisis, which is aggravated by heightened competitiveness, the volatility of the country's economy and the current global financial crisis. Throughout the world, the tendency has been to focus on economic values at the expense of the essential core values governing basic human needs. This has contributed substantially to engendering disillusionment among young people, who foresee limited possibilities for building lives anchored in values that can assure them of a prominent and pro-active role in the unending process of renewal of human societies.



Taking into account the above context and drawing on the social thought of eminent intellectuals who for many years have warned of the effects on people and institutions of current development models and modes of capitalist production, the article discusses the serious crisis that is now affecting youth, and the uncertainties and tribulations that have helped to shape the crisis. The text is also based on data from recent studies, surveys and censuses depicting the youth and employment situation in Brazil.

YOUTH IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY AND EXTREME COMPETITIVENESS

Some 50 years ago, Pierre Furter (1967), in his classic work on youth, warned that the reigning spirit of the time was confined to a quest for excitement – beauty, sex, violence, stardom, travel, holidays, life as endless pleasure and leisure, and the search for eternal youth in the style of new Olympians. All these images, multiplied to satiety, imparted a strong impression that a piece of paradise was within everyone’s reach, with the prospect of prolonging one’s teenage years indefinitely. Rather than encouraging young people to adopt a new outlook on the world, the cult of youth became a kind of godless religion for saving humanity, a “rarefied utopia basking in the magic of image” (Furter, 1967, p. 15). The increasing pressure to seek eternal youth, in practice, has served only to curtail young peoples’ human development.

In the decades that have elapsed since the 1960s, so adroitly described by Furter, it can be argued that a similar situation persists to this day. But it is on a much larger scale given the enormous changes the world has undergone since that heady period. In particular, structural changes in the capitalist system, driven and given a new lease of life by unprecedented advances in science and technology, have made production means eminently competitive. This exaggerated competitiveness, the trademark of neoliberal-inspired globalized economics, has drawn institutions and people into never-ending conflicts and disputes, intensified individualism, dampened idealism and relegated one of the most cherished aspirations of the French Revolution – solidarity – to the outer margins of society. Space has opened up for the ideals of material progress and wealth accumulation to occupy the very core of political and economic decision-making. Worse still, the monumental intensification of competition has often made us part company with the com-



mitment and the social and ethical responsibility that underlie the principles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the many other ethical undertakings forged under the aegis of the United Nations. This unbridled competition is now firmly on its way to undermining the prospects of generations of young people.

There is little doubt that the rarefied utopia basking in the magic of images, to use Furter's phrase (1967, p. 15), was one of the root causes of the historic student movement of May 1968 in France, led by Cohn-Bendit, and of later movements, such as the Columbia and Berkeley student protests in the United States. Despite their contradictions and diverse *modi operandi*, brilliantly highlighted in the book *May 68: La Brèche* by Edgard Morin, Claude Lefort and Cornelius Castoriadis (2008), the events of May 1968 did not prevent the multi-talented philosopher Morin from stating that the outburst did indeed represent young peoples' aspirations to a different way of building a different kind of society and to forging alternative policies – all aspirations which the state, the institutions and the major political parties had, for years, hidden under a veil of silence (Morin, Lefort & Castoriadis, 2008).

Since 1968, these hopes for an alternative future and a better life have, little by little, multiplied, matured and coalesced in the different sectors of society. This has been particularly the case among the younger echelons, where two different mindsets tend to predominate: one of "extended adolescence" (of great interest to capitalist enterprises that welcome this segment as an actual or potential, lucrative consumer market); and another composed of young people with higher ideals, who are keen to exercise their rights to citizenship, education and decent jobs.

Thus, it is a misnomer to speak in terms of "youth" as a coherent bloc. Rather, we must view youth as separate, multifaceted groups of young individuals with very different perceptions of the world around them. The students and workers of May 1968 aspired to a role as 'agents of change', refusing to allow their political masters to continue treating them as mere spectators on the sidelines of the debate about the future of a society they were a key part of. It should never be forgotten that throughout the history of culture and human society, youth has never stayed on the sidelines. On the contrary, youth have traditionally been in the front lines, – in the advance party – such as in the Middle Ages, when students agitated for the foundation of one of the world's oldest universities in Bologna (Italy). Then there was the important role played by school students in the expulsion of



the French from Rio de Janeiro in 1710, and the students' spirited defence of public schools in Brazil in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The *Report on the Rights and Responsibilities of Youth* (UNESCO, 1975), published in 1975 by the World Youth Assembly at the behest of the Council of Europe, with contributions by experts from 18 European countries, drew attention to the importance of introducing measures to encourage youth participation in decision-making. Doing so would ostensibly afford them opportunities in the labour market and get them to play a more prominent role in social and cultural activities. However, it was evident that the message of 1968 and its aftermath continued to be disregarded, even though many of the challenges and contradictions that had arisen had settled down – and indeed matured – over the years.

On the contrary, the changes that followed the widespread introduction of free market economics under the leadership of President Reagan and Prime Minister Thatcher ushered in a new World Order that knew few barriers and was controlled by the hegemony of the markets. As Hardt and Negri (2001) have aptly pointed out, since the closing decades of the 20th century, we have witnessed an irresistible and irreversible march towards globalisation in terms of economic and cultural exchanges, that have given rise to a new 'logic of supremacy'. This process can be traced back to the post-war collapse of colonial regimes, and later, to when the Soviet Union imploded in 1989 under the pressures of capitalism. In this entirely new situation, nation-states with their own sovereignty in decline were forced to open their doors to multinational corporations. According to Hardt and Negri (2001), this meant that the primary factors of production and exchange – money, technology, people and goods – rapidly began to surpass narrow national borders, effectively creating a powerful global economic scenario in which it became increasingly difficult for nation-states to regulate their economies independently.

Federico Mayor, who headed UNESCO in the 1990s, and who faced, with aplomb, the enormous challenges to education posed by this New Order, argued in his writings that globalisation was the 'preserve of the few', while the majority were effectively 'globalised'. This majority included vast numbers of young people still tied to hard work in the fields, with little hope of a better life. They were young men and women in shanties on the outskirts of major cities scraping together a living in the informal labour market, and young people who had given up all hope and taken to living in the streets and places under the yoke of drugs and violent crime.

At the same time, it is fair to say that many were able to break through the barriers of inequality and enjoy better lifestyles. One should also not forget the young people belonging to the more favoured, elite echelons of society, some of whom benefited from the better economic circumstances of their families by studying in good educational institutions at home and abroad. These were the young people who expanded their body of knowledge and widened the cognitive distance between themselves and the cohort of their excluded compatriots. There were also others who used their privileged economic status to indulge in life-wasting, perilous pursuits such as drug-taking and unprotected sex.

One should never lose sight of the complexities of being young in societies characterised by high levels of competitiveness and the gradual loss of values that are essential to peoples' lives and well-being. The disintegration of families, which traditionally played an important role in socializing children and adolescents, together with the inevitable 'socializing' influence of the media, whose survival depends on creating programs and broadcasting messages geared to sensational ephemera, have produced a difficult dilemma for the education of our young people. For a variety of reasons, schools, which are already losing sight of their educational missions, are failing to successfully counterbalance the power of the media, which typically convey a host of messages that run counter to thought and reflection. While there are TV channels broadcasting excellent programmes of high educational value, they are not widely available to the masses and, would probably not be valued by a society like Brazil's, that fails to give priority to the basic elements of human development such as education, health, sanitation, decent jobs and housing.

It would be appropriate here to cite the thoughts of Herbert Marcuse on the effects that highly industrialized societies have on shaping one-dimensional minds. In one of his works, *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse attempts to describe the extent of the primacy of technological reason in the 21st century's highly-industrialized societies. He argues that technology is by no means neutral and cannot be separated from the uses to which it is put. In other words, the choice of a particular technology effectively plays straight into the hands of dominant interests. It follows that the rights and freedoms that were so vital to the origins and early stages of industrial society have been weakened and have lost their rationality. Life, as an end in itself, begins to differ qualitatively from life as a means to an end. The increasing mechanization of work at this stage of advanced capitalism exploits workers, while simultaneously altering the structure and status of the exploited (Marcuse, 2007).



As Marcuse pointed out, the primacy of technological reason, as a major force in driving relationships between people, societies and countries, affects the 'rights and freedoms' of people (the mainsprings of human progress) in different ways. Some progress was certainly made towards improving living conditions in general, especially after the formalization of the innumerable norms and ethical undertakings established by countries, such as the *World Declaration of Human Rights*, the *Recommendation against Discrimination in Education*, the *World Declaration on Education for All*, and many others. However, these advances have not succeeded in counterbalancing the negative effects of a global order predominantly headed in an entirely opposite direction – towards the material side of life.

YOUTH AND WORK IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY: NEW LEARNING, NEW CHALLENGES

The global economic crisis that culminated in the bankruptcy of some of Wall Street's financial institutions in 2008 and then spread to other parts of the world led to recession in several countries. This has had a negative effect in social terms. The crisis came down particularly hard on the younger segments of society where it was felt most prominently in the employment area. The table below provides global data on unemployment among young people and adults. The table clearly shows the difference in opportunities for the two sectors.

This worrying scenario prompted the ILO to place the unemployment issue on the agenda of the 2012 International Labour Conference with a view to discussing proposals that might provide different ways forward given that, according to the ILO Report submitted to the conference as a working document, the world's young population was considered a substantial asset for driving innovation and creativity in economies and societies. The figures presented therein show that from 2000 to 2011, the overall proportion of young people in work declined from 52.9% to 48.7%, meaning that in 2011, fewer than 1 in 2 young people around the world were actively engaged in the labour market. In 2011 alone, the percentage of young workers actually working fell from 46.6% to 42.2%. Among the reasons for this trend the ILO highlighted discouragement and lack of motivation. It is clear that if this situation proceeds apace, youth unemployment is likely to reach unprec-



UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS, WORLD AND REGIONS (%)

| YOUTH | 2000 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012* | | |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|----------------|----------------------|----------------|
| | | | | | | | | | CI Lower Bound | Preliminary Estimate | CI Upper Bound |
| World | 12.7 | 12.8 | 12.2 | 11.6 | 11.8 | 12.8 | 12.6 | 12.4 | 12.3 | 12.6 | 12.8 |
| Developed Economies and European Union | 13.5 | 14.3 | 13.3 | 12.5 | 13.3 | 17.4 | 18.1 | 17.6 | 17.7 | 17.9 | 18.1 |
| Central and South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) and CIS | 19.7 | 18.2 | 18.3 | 17.4 | 17.0 | 20.4 | 19.2 | 17.7 | 16.8 | 17.1 | 17.5 |
| East Asia | 9.3 | 8.6 | 8.3 | 7.9 | 9.1 | 9.2 | 8.9 | 9.2 | 9.3 | 9.5 | 9.8 |
| South-East Asia and the Pacific | 13.2 | 17.5 | 17.1 | 14.9 | 14.1 | 14.0 | 13.4 | 12.7 | 12.8 | 13.0 | 13.1 |
| South Asia | 10.3 | 10.0 | 9.3 | 9.3 | 9.0 | 9.7 | 10.2 | 9.7 | 9.6 | 9.8 | 10.0 |
| Latin America and the Caribbean | 15.7 | 16.4 | 15.3 | 14.2 | 13.6 | 15.7 | 14.1 | 13.4 | 13.1 | 13.5 | 13.9 |
| Middle East | 25.5 | 25.5 | 25.3 | 24.6 | 25.4 | 25.5 | 27.5 | 27.6 | 26.6 | 28.1 | 29.6 |
| North Africa | 26.1 | 24.4 | 22.2 | 20.8 | 20.3 | 20.4 | 20.1 | 23.3 | 23.1 | 23.8 | 24.5 |
| Sub Saharan Africa | 13.2 | 12.0 | 11.8 | 11.8 | 11.9 | 12.0 | 11.9 | 11.9 | 11.7 | 11.9 | 12.0 |
| YOUTH | 2000 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012* | | |
| | | | | | | | | | CI Lower Bound | Preliminary Estimate | CI Upper Bound |
| World | 4.6 | 4.4 | 4.2 | 3.9 | 4.1 | 4.7 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.4 | 4.5 | 4.6 |
| Developed Economies and European Union | 5.6 | 5.8 | 5.3 | 4.8 | 5.0 | 7.1 | 7.5 | 7.2 | 7.2 | 7.3 | 7.4 |
| Central and South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) and CIS | 8.0 | 7.4 | 7.3 | 6.7 | 6.8 | 8.3 | 7.8 | 7.2 | 6.7 | 6.9 | 7.0 |
| East Asia | 3.5 | 3.2 | 3.0 | 2.9 | 3.3 | 3.4 | 3.3 | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.5 | 3.6 |
| South-East Asia and the Pacific | 2.5 | 3.3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.0 | 2.7 | 2.5 | 2.4 | 2.5 | 2.5 |
| South Asia | 2.6 | 3.0 | 2.6 | 2.3 | 2.4 | 2.6 | 2.3 | 2.2 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 2.4 |
| Latin America and the Caribbean | 6.4 | 5.8 | 5.4 | 5.1 | 4.8 | 5.7 | 5.0 | 4.9 | 4.8 | 4.9 | 5.0 |
| Middle East | 6.8 | 6.8 | 6.6 | 6.4 | 6.6 | 7.0 | 7.4 | 7.4 | 7.0 | 7.5 | 7.9 |
| North Africa | 9.0 | 6.8 | 6.5 | 6.5 | 6.1 | 6.2 | 6.2 | 6.8 | 6.9 | 7.1 | 7.3 |
| Sub Saharan Africa | 6.7 | 5.9 | 5.8 | 5.8 | 5.9 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 5.9 | 6.0 | 6.0 |

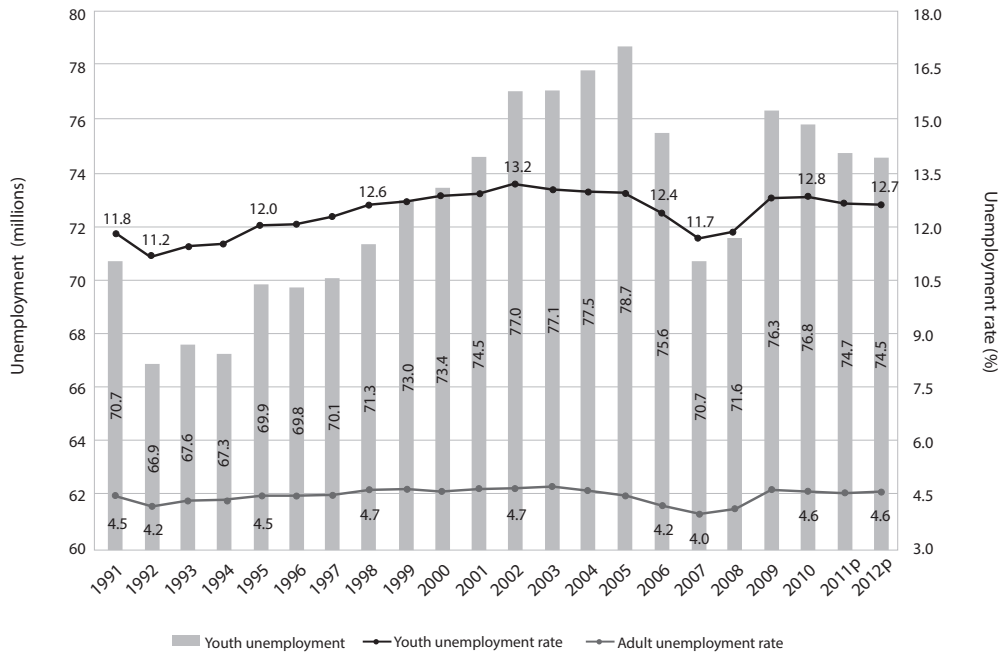
* 2012 are preliminary estimates: CI = confidence interval.

Source: ILO. Trenas Econometric Models, October 2012; see also source of Table A2.



edented levels. In 2011, for example, 4 in 10 of all the unemployed the world over were young. Overall, youths were 3 times more likely than adults to be unemployed (ILO, 2012).

GLOBAL RATES OF YOUTH AND ADULT UNEMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT, 1991-2012



p= Projection
 Source: BIT: Trends econometric models: A review of the methodology (Genebra, 2011).

The Wall Street crisis of 2008, as noted above, had deleterious effects on youth employment in the countries hardest hit by the crisis. However, it is worth adding that, even in non-crisis scenarios, current development models have been substantially limited in their ability to generate social inclusion, especially where youth is concerned. When economic crises do occur, such as that of 2008, the young tend to be the victims of unemployment. The main fallout, as highlighted by the 2012 ILO Report, is youth disillusionment and continuing lack of incentive.



The crisis unleashed in 2008 has impacted countries differently. Its effects were more pronounced in the US and the industrialized countries of the EU. In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, conditions that were more favourable to economic growth helped employment to continue growing (a trend noted since the beginning of the 21st century). In percentage terms, the regional employment/population ratio increased from 58.7% to 61.9% (ILO, 2013). In Brazil, still experiencing a comfortable rate of employment, this favourable picture could change quite rapidly, due to the current slowdown in raw material exports, and affect the young more directly. The abovementioned ILO report pointed out that, in the developing countries, home to 90% of all young people, despite low wages, the vast majority need to work in order to survive, and are especially vulnerable to underemployment and poverty.

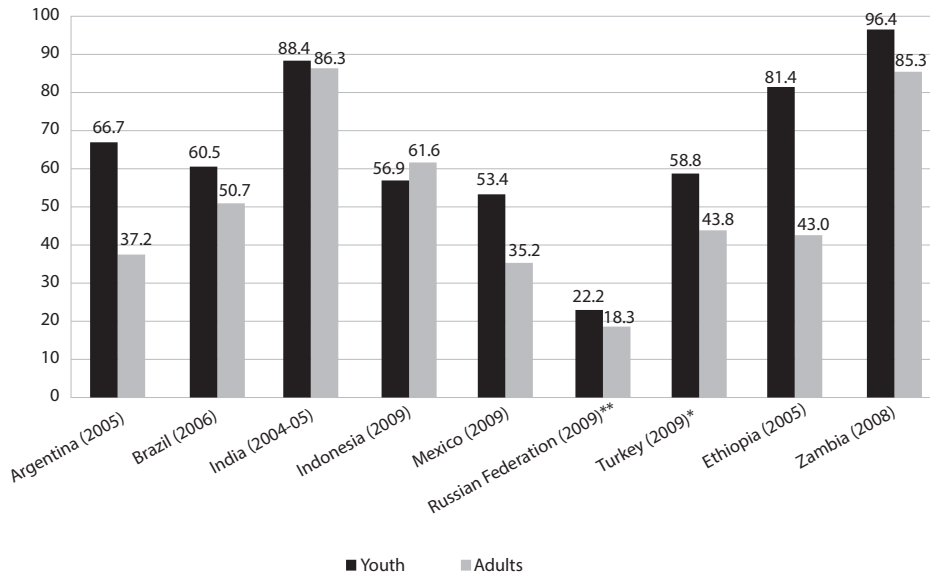
According to the following ILO Report, published in 2013, increased employment in Latin America and the Caribbean helped to improve the social conditions of some 291 million people in the region's jobs market in 2012. Around 19 million were unemployed (down 3 million since 2002) and fewer than 32% were employed in insecure jobs or the informal sector (down 5% from 2001). While informal employment continued to decline (partly due to government efforts) in the more developed countries of the region, about 40% nevertheless continued working in the informal sector. The number of poorer workers declined, and in some cases, by a considerable margin. From 2002 to 2012, the proportion of workers living in households under US\$2/person/day fell from 16% (of the total workforce) in 2002 to under 8% in 2012. Meanwhile, the rate decreased from 8% to under 4% over the same period for workers in extreme poverty (i.e. under US\$1.25/person/day).

Despite this generally more positive scenario, the scale of unregistered (informal) youth employment continues to be of major concern in many Latin American countries. In Argentina, for example, informal employment among young workers surpasses that of adults by a ratio of 2 to 1. Informality is also substantial in Brazil. In countries such as Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama and Peru, informal employment among young people in the 15 to 19 year-old bracket is over 30% higher than the rate for adults. In the latter countries, the average rate of informality in 2012 among 15 to 29 year-olds was 82.4%, compared to a rate of 50.2% for adult workers (ILO, 2012, pp. 18-19). The worrying point to consider here is that the large number of young people in informal employment is the result of the inability of the modern,



formal sector of the economy to create sufficient jobs – a situation exacerbated by the 2008 financial crisis. The chart below indicates the percentage share of ‘informal’ workers in the economies of a selection of countries.

PERCENTAGE OF YOUNG AND ADULT WORKERS IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY (SELECTED COUNTRIES)



* The percentage of adults refers to the total population. **The percentage of adults refers to the population aged between 30 and 59. The youth percentage refers to the population aged between 15 and 29.

Source: ILO database

A key section in the 2012 ILO Report calls attention to the decline in jobs for young workers. One of the main challenges ahead is whether temporary employment will be regarded as a step toward a permanent job or a trap exposing young people to a spiral of temporary jobs alternating with periods of unemployment. This situation is becoming increasingly commonplace, due to the volatility and fluctuations in the job markets, where temporary seasonal jobs are taken up only to be followed by more dismissal prospects and the further dashing of young peoples’ hopes and expectations. On the other hand, temporary contracts that are converted into regular employment can, in fact, prevent young people from thinking more broadly in terms of future horizons and prospects. It is also worth emphasizing that temporary job placements do not ordinarily carry the same quality and security as permanent jobs.

It is commonly argued that temporary employment or actual unemployment among graduates of secondary school or higher education is due to their own inadequacies or the absence of the skills demanded by employers. To a certain extent this criticism is accurate since with few exceptions, education systems make no correlation (or are ideologically disinclined to do so) between the real requirements of the productive sectors and education, averring that this could undermine the basic purpose and value of education. At the same time, it is essential not to lose sight of the increasing advances in technology and communication sciences which, coupled with fallacious approaches to the issues of economic development and production, exert a powerful effect on the burgeoning unemployment crisis. In a recent article, economist Paul Krugman, the most eminent exponent in the current debate on global economic prospects, analysed *'The war against the unemployed'* (a title which alone reveals the gravity of the existing dilemma). The piece explores the situation in the US, and asserts that the 'war' being waged against the jobless is motivated, not only by cruelty, but also by a combination of mean-spiritedness and faulty economic analysis. Modern conservatives believe that the character of the US is being transformed and undermined by social programmes that, in the memorable words of Paul Ryan, Chairman of the US House of Representatives Budget Committee, "turn the safety net into a hammock on the porch, encouraging able-bodied people to opt out into lives of complacency and dependency". In short, he is convinced that unemployment insurance encourages irresponsible workers to stay unemployed (Krugman, 2013).

The 2012 ILO Report on the youth employment crisis recognizes the need to rethink employment-friendly macroeconomic policies that call for a new ethic and a new sense of direction. The fundamental assumption regarding the macroeconomic setting, whereby high economic growth rate is supposed to lead to job creation, has proved lacking. Given the serious employment problem, a need exists, therefore, to formulate a new agenda that looks beyond current, short-term concerns over macroeconomic stabilization and market liberalization (ILO, 2012). Moreover, as for the 'ethical' dimension of development, the UNESCO Report, "Our Creative Diversity", coordinated by Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, completed in the mid-1990s (i.e. in the early years of the major thrust towards globalization), already referred to the need for nations to adhere to principles and guidelines that represented a new ethical approach:

Since the emergence of *homo sapiens*, human groups have been able to exchange discoveries and innovations, experience and institutional knowledge. Societies



have evolved on the basis of cooperation between people from different cultures. Therefore it is important to promote cultural exchange through new sociopolitical agreements negotiated in the context of a universal ethic (Cuéllar, 1997, p. 44).

The idea of a ‘universal ethic’ governing development cooperation among nations with a view to seeking new ways forward as posited by Morin (Morin, Lefort & Castoriadis, 2008) is a vital component of global survival that requires regulatory mechanisms to curb destabilizing, crisis-provoking greed and ambition. Yet there is also an urgent need for an ethical approach that will boost confidence in economic and political relations as a whole. The abovementioned UNESCO Report puts it in the following terms:

If the social agents are linked and motivated by mutually agreed commitments, cooperation can flourish between different peoples and cultures with diverse interests, and conflicts are thus kept within acceptable, and even constructive, boundaries. Therefore, it is imperative to identify a core of common values and ethical principles (Cuéllar, 1997, p. 44).

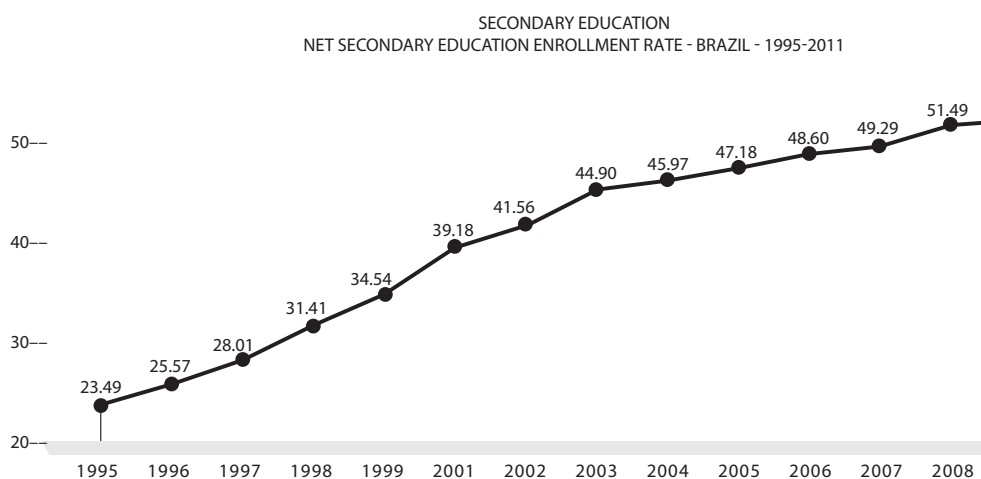
Along the same lines, the Indian economist Amartya Sen, in his thesis on development as a ‘source of freedom’, argues that despite the general acknowledgment that freed-up economic transactions are a principal multiplier of economic growth, the vehement criticisms of this approach also need to be taken into account. It is important not only to give due weight to the markets, but also to value the role of other economic, social and political freedoms that enhance and enrich peoples’ lives (Sen, 2000). Among those freedoms, although preceded by Enlightenment promises (but not put into effect during the two centuries that followed), stands the freedom represented by education. Education, with its multidimensional effects, needs to be taken into serious consideration by society and governments as the greatest common good of all time.

THE EDUCATION OF YOUTH IN BRAZIL: CONSTRAINTS AND PROSPECTS

At the current stage of social evolution, education has a leading role, both for the empowerment of people generally and for affording improved opportunities for young people to enter the labour market.



It has to be recognized that school is failing to keep up with the impressive strides made in science and technology and their social implications and applications. As set forth in the 2012 ILO Report, education, training and lifelong learning involve a virtuous circle of enhanced learning, productivity and development. It is now absolutely crucial to take these factors into account given the acceleration of technological progress and globalization in the modern world of work, where social skills are as important as professional qualifications for boosting the employability of young people. OECD data (ILO, 2012), for example, reveal a significant link between educational attainment and youth employment. Individuals between 15 and 29 who have completed secondary school certainly have better prospects in the labour market than those who have not graduated from secondary school (ILO, 2012). In this context, the substantial expansion of secondary education in Brazil has been a significant breakthrough. In 1995-2011, the net enrolment rate in secondary education increased from 23.49 (1995) to 52.25 (2011). The following chart and table provide more details of this expansion, and highlight the inequalities still existing between major regions of the country – yet another key challenge for education and employment policies in Brazil.



Source: IBGE/PNAD: Compilation Todos Pela Educação

Notes: The estimates take into consideration age in complete years on 30 June, or school age.

In 2004 the rural area of the North Region was incorporated into the PNAD sampling plan.

Up to 2003, data for the North Region only refer to the urban area.

From 2004 onwards the numbers refer to the North Region urban and rural areas together.



ENSINO MÉDIO
TAXA LÍQUIDA DE MATRÍCULA – 1995-2011
POR UNIDADES DA FEDERAÇÃO E REGIÕES METROPOLITANAS

| | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2001 | 2002 |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Região Norte | 18,18 | 17,39 | 19,64 | 22,98 | 26,89 | 29,08 | 31,52 |
| Rondônia | 22,64 | 28,77 | 26,32 | 34,59 | 34,36 | 36,86 | 38,36 |
| Acre | 20,73 | 18,98 | 24,17 | 23,88 | 29,49 | 29,89 | 33,03 |
| Amazonas | 17,74 | 19,00 | 20,52 | 23,08 | 27,39 | 32,15 | 35,67 |
| Roraima | 32,26 | 33,35 | 27,01 | 28,26 | 45,24 | 39,82 | 39,79 |
| Pará | 17,00 | 13,75 | 18,69 | 19,30 | 23,52 | 24,63 | 25,55 |
| Amapá | 25,34 | 15,52 | 20,45 | 34,02 | 33,69 | 27,95 | 42,38 |
| Tocantins | 13,26 | 14,76 | 13,15 | 20,24 | 24,10 | 30,55 | 32,38 |
| Região Nordeste | 12,41 | 13,68 | 14,44 | 16,27 | 18,23 | 22,67 | 24,23 |
| Maranhão | 12,45 | 13,13 | 13,35 | 15,20 | 15,52 | 19,90 | 20,00 |
| Piauí | 10,53 | 11,90 | 12,07 | 10,41 | 14,99 | 22,93 | 16,82 |
| Ceará | 13,21 | 15,11 | 14,75 | 21,14 | 21,02 | 27,11 | 31,25 |
| Rio Grande do Norte | 17,24 | 21,31 | 19,75 | 17,45 | 21,63 | 31,13 | 31,12 |
| Paraíba | 14,03 | 14,61 | 17,08 | 18,14 | 20,67 | 20,47 | 19,74 |
| Pernambuco | 14,29 | 15,83 | 16,84 | 17,48 | 19,47 | 23,83 | 25,43 |
| Alagoas | 13,55 | 10,53 | 12,94 | 10,83 | 14,92 | 15,02 | 19,27 |
| Sergipe | 9,40 | 11,14 | 11,86 | 17,54 | 17,55 | 21,81 | 25,30 |
| Bahia | 10,40 | 11,94 | 12,82 | 15,07 | 17,51 | 21,36 | 24,24 |
| Região Sudeste | 30,67 | 33,71 | 36,59 | 41,47 | 44,70 | 50,68 | 54,42 |
| Minas Gerais | 21,14 | 23,04 | 24,47 | 32,64 | 36,31 | 40,86 | 45,61 |
| Espírito Santo | 26,27 | 27,73 | 30,69 | 36,10 | 37,77 | 43,03 | 48,48 |
| Rio de Janeiro | 28,59 | 30,24 | 32,39 | 34,90 | 38,70 | 45,25 | 46,26 |
| São Paulo | 36,91 | 41,41 | 44,61 | 48,32 | 51,34 | 58,04 | 62,66 |
| Região Sul | 30,42 | 33,36 | 36,55 | 39,77 | 45,33 | 48,80 | 50,84 |
| Paraná | 27,36 | 30,16 | 33,00 | 39,01 | 48,22 | 48,71 | 50,64 |
| Santa Catarina | 29,62 | 36,08 | 36,67 | 41,54 | 43,06 | 53,69 | 55,94 |
| Rio Grande do Sul | 34,07 | 34,97 | 40,19 | 39,56 | 43,65 | 46,01 | 47,94 |
| Região Centro-Oeste | 22,57 | 24,74 | 29,16 | 30,35 | 33,53 | 39,27 | 41,46 |
| Mato Grosso do Sul | 23,71 | 28,28 | 29,92 | 30,50 | 34,17 | 35,09 | 38,46 |
| Mato Grosso | 19,04 | 23,33 | 24,74 | 24,88 | 29,14 | 40,75 | 38,89 |
| Goiás | 20,42 | 19,35 | 25,79 | 29,00 | 31,42 | 37,40 | 41,36 |
| Distrito Federal | 31,36 | 35,93 | 40,51 | 39,63 | 43,27 | 46,33 | 49,20 |



| 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2011 |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 34,82 | 29,50 | 32,19 | 36,01 | 38,30 | 40,84 | 40,33 | 42,98 |
| 39,37 | 38,16 | 35,94 | 39,14 | 43,21 | 43,16 | 48,01 | 46,25 |
| 45,31 | 29,77 | 37,17 | 45,26 | 42,87 | 44,59 | 49,28 | 42,75 |
| 36,73 | 31,39 | 35,20 | 38,52 | 36,37 | 40,76 | 41,19 | 41,74 |
| 50,76 | 40,40 | 39,85 | 47,72 | 52,88 | 54,11 | 54,10 | 55,28 |
| 29,54 | 23,80 | 26,33 | 29,09 | 34,49 | 35,97 | 32,66 | 39,55 |
| 39,75 | 41,42 | 50,31 | 49,46 | 50,56 | 56,30 | 51,59 | 50,43 |
| 36,78 | 36,75 | 38,68 | 46,35 | 45,97 | 53,06 | 56,77 | 52,94 |
| 27,45 | 29,49 | 32,40 | 35,12 | 36,44 | 37,91 | 40,57 | 44,36 |
| 23,05 | 28,43 | 31,26 | 35,22 | 36,63 | 35,68 | 41,36 | 45,17 |
| 26,79 | 25,13 | 28,58 | 33,84 | 33,86 | 36,79 | 36,52 | 41,59 |
| 31,74 | 35,79 | 40,93 | 45,06 | 44,40 | 47,24 | 50,94 | 53,76 |
| 34,90 | 36,32 | 40,05 | 35,53 | 40,21 | 35,93 | 41,99 | 48,04 |
| 23,30 | 25,34 | 25,32 | 31,29 | 33,54 | 38,10 | 37,99 | 43,63 |
| 28,82 | 28,8 | 32,09 | 34,18 | 35,54 | 33,52 | 38,81 | 44,03 |
| 18,05 | 22,30 | 23,32 | 28,39 | 26,02 | 33,34 | 34,27 | 33,86 |
| 31,14 | 31,38 | 28,19 | 30,65 | 34,98 | 37,50 | 39,62 | 43,09 |
| 27,32 | 28,83 | 32,09 | 33,23 | 35,43 | 37,48 | 37,63 | 40,93 |
| 57,73 | 59,99 | 59,74 | 59,98 | 60,49 | 63,04 | 61,60 | 59,61 |
| 50,06 | 52,02 | 53,75 | 53,08 | 53,26 | 57,77 | 55,69 | 55,95 |
| 48,31 | 53,59 | 44,96 | 51,80 | 43,90 | 51,53 | 53,35 | 53,58 |
| 49,16 | 49,23 | 48,99 | 52,57 | 55,48 | 54,81 | 51,90 | 50,91 |
| 65,21 | 68,21 | 67,92 | 67,27 | 67,61 | 69,99 | 69,26 | 65,76 |
| 52,64 | 54,39 | 53,98 | 54,36 | 53,53 | 55,79 | 56,92 | 54,41 |
| 53,63 | 53,14 | 52,08 | 51,42 | 56,33 | 56,61 | 58,36 | 57,53 |
| 56,56 | 59,67 | 64,11 | 62,37 | 54,09 | 59,25 | 59,65 | 53,10 |
| 49,37 | 52,54 | 49,74 | 52,16 | 50,14 | 52,84 | 53,76 | 51,81 |
| 45,17 | 46,83 | 47,08 | 49,17 | 51,03 | 52,51 | 55,32 | 56,86 |
| 44,30 | 42,18 | 42,82 | 44,37 | 41,16 | 47,98 | 48,31 | 47,96 |
| 38,57 | 45,22 | 46,24 | 47,21 | 48,60 | 50,81 | 53,99 | 59,78 |
| 44,26 | 47,62 | 46,30 | 49,33 | 54,04 | 53,82 | 55,23 | 56,31 |
| 56,29 | 51,36 | 54,75 | 56,02 | 57,05 | 56,54 | 64,33 | 63,02 |



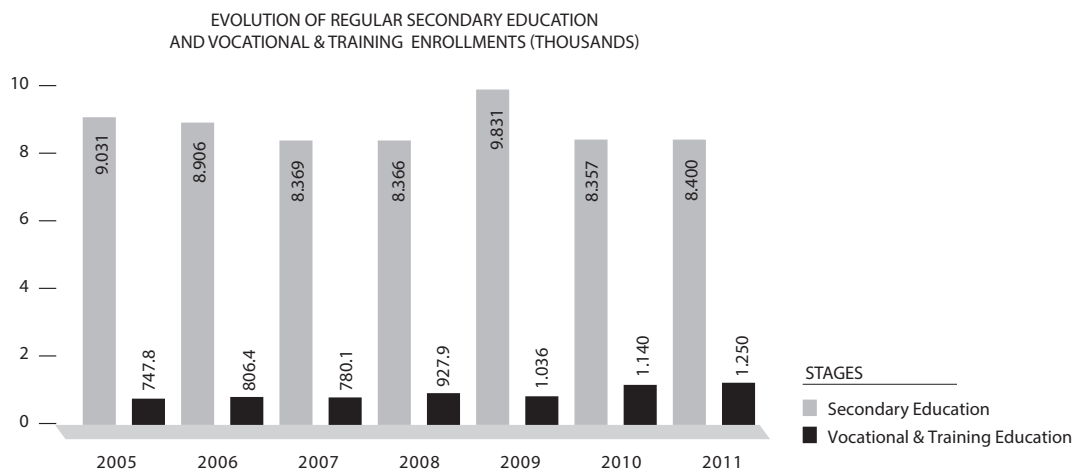
ENSINO MÉDIO
TAXA LÍQUIDA DE MATRÍCULA – 1995-2011
POR UNIDADES DA FEDERAÇÃO E REGIÕES METROPOLITANAS

| | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2001 | 2002 |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Região Metropolitanas | | | | | | | |
| Belém | 27,11 | 24,08 | 29,59 | 23,76 | 30,93 | 31,78 | 32,38 |
| Fortaleza | 23,08 | 24,58 | 25,48 | 30,32 | 32,57 | 37,50 | 41,79 |
| Recife | 20,69 | 24,14 | 23,15 | 24,83 | 28,80 | 34,16 | 38,03 |
| Salvador | 19,35 | 23,55 | 25,24 | 30,09 | 32,14 | 35,92 | 36,85 |
| Belo Horizonte | 24,70 | 24,95 | 28,81 | 35,10 | 39,01 | 51,27 | 55,23 |
| Rio de Janeiro | 31,49 | 32,22 | 35,52 | 36,65 | 39,98 | 47,98 | 47,96 |
| São Paulo | 39,65 | 43,37 | 44,20 | 48,78 | 51,27 | 60,47 | 62,86 |
| Curitiba | 34,63 | 32,99 | 33,22 | 42,27 | 47,27 | 45,50 | 48,84 |
| Porto Alegre | 34,99 | 37,01 | 38,81 | 39,55 | 42,60 | 49,17 | 49,13 |

Source: IBGE/PNAD: Compilation Todos Pela Educação.

Notes: The estimates take into consideration age in complete years on 30 June, or school age. In 2004 the rural area of the North Region was incorporated into the PNAD sampling plan. Up to 2003, data for the North Region only refer to the urban area. From 2004 onwards the numbers refer to the North Region urban and rural areas together.

On the other hand, of greater concern for the development of policies to assist youth employment is the percentage share of vocational education in the total enrolment figures at the secondary school level. In 2011, out of 8.4 million students enrolled in secondary schools, those in vocational educa-

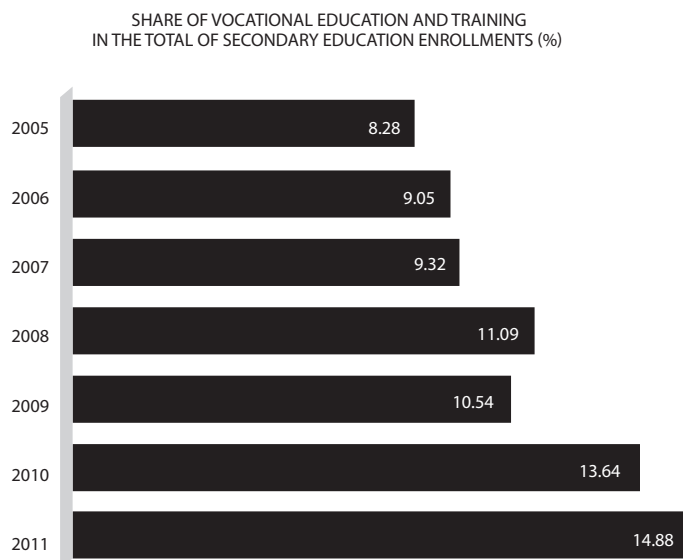


Source: MEC/DEED



| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2011 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 34,46 | 35,02 | 38,70 | 39,91 | 45,20 | 49,94 | 42,91 | 50,30 |
| | 40,00 | 46,82 | 48,53 | 50,65 | 48,76 | 52,00 | 52,66 | 55,63 |
| | 38,72 | 41,22 | 43,31 | 46,35 | 46,73 | 45,19 | 48,91 | 53,88 |
| | 40,66 | 40,43 | 41,73 | 43,52 | 46,23 | 46,00 | 41,97 | 47,64 |
| | 58,25 | 60,55 | 61,01 | 59,57 | 58,24 | 63,79 | 61,96 | 59,49 |
| | 51,60 | 51,49 | 51,05 | 54,82 | 56,32 | 58,69 | 52,70 | 52,70 |
| | 64,69 | 68,69 | 68,44 | 68,48 | 70,50 | 71,89 | 69,19 | 64,92 |
| | 56,75 | 54,83 | 54,24 | 51,58 | 53,03 | 62,40 | 58,53 | 53,41 |
| | 50,96 | 50,47 | 49,73 | 51,08 | 51,01 | 53,61 | 53,20 | 51,68 |

tion numbered 1.25 million, i.e. only 14.88% of the total. The following graphs compare enrolments in vocational and secondary school education.



Source: MEC/INEP/DEED



The imbalances displayed in the above charts between secondary school ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’ education, the result of a discriminatory cultural heritage, have been the subject of repeated criticism both from the productive sectors of the economy and students about to finish elementary (*fundamental*) school, who increasingly seek to enrol in vocational training courses. PRONATEC (*National Programme for Access to Technical Education and Employment*), introduced by the Federal Government in October 2011, is the main initiative taken to reverse this situation. Over the next few years, PRONATEC aims to increase access to vocational and technical courses, employing different modalities and course durations (a minimum of 160 hours) to 1 million individuals, with special emphasis on younger people. Their aim is to satisfy market requirements and it is expected that the initiative will help reduce youth unemployment.

On the other hand, when secondary school education is examined in terms of market needs, consensus is not always forthcoming on whether this vocational and technical component actually helps young people get jobs. Research analyst Felicia Madeira, for example, says that no reliable study exists to suggest that technical schools (a minority) are more efficient as a gateway to the job market than secondary schools (Madeira, 2006). Examining available research, she goes on to emphasise the importance of secondary education in developing higher levels of achievement, once the new technologies have been absorbed by the schools (Madeira, 2006). The main issues now concern (i) the quality of education on offer, and (ii) the age-grade distortions which currently infest the system. According to the *Basic Education Yearbook 2013*, around 80% of 15 to 17 year-olds are enrolled in school, with only 52.25% in secondary school. Many have already dropped out of school, 15.1% do not study at all, and 25.5% are still in elementary school. 1.6 million youngsters in the 15 to 17 age bracket are actually out of school (Anuário, 2013). As for quality, the following table summarizes the results of the *National Secondary Education Examination (ENEM)*, which gives an idea of the long road that needs to be trodden to attain the quality education required by the managers of Brazil’s current basic education system.

| ENEM RANKINGS BY AREA OF KNOWLEDGE | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|-------------|------------|---------|
| | NATURAL SCIENCES | HUMAN SCIENCES | MATHEMATICS | PORTUGUESE | AVERAGE |
| 2011 | 465.56 | 472.59 | 521.07 | 519.35 | 494.64 |
| 2010 | 485.69 | 538.73 | 510.26 | 510.19 | 511.22 |
| 2009 | 502.14 | 502.44 | 500.77 | 500.95 | 501.58 |

Source: INEP/MEC.

It is worth noting that recent research on secondary schools detected a gross absentee rate of youths aged 15+ years concomitant with increased net attendance levels, which from 2009 to 2011 rose from 50.9% to 51.6%. The decline in the gross attendance levels can be explained by several factors including students' lack of interest and motivation (Neri & Oliveira, 2012) due to curricula which contain too many subjects, many of which are completely unrelated to the students' daily lives. According to Gomes et al. (2011), if secondary school were made more useful and attractive, the dropout rates would be lower – a sign that it is better to put quality before quantity. From this viewpoint, an article by Hargreaves is both topical and relevant:

Schools that educate young people for the knowledge society have to break with many aspects of the past. The agrarian and industrial models of one teacher>one class schooling need to replace standardized instruction that emphasizes only the basics of literacy and numeracy, with a broad and more cognitively challenging and creative curriculum; teachers need constantly to work and inquire into their teaching together; teachers' judgements should be informed by objective evidence as well as by subjective experience and intuition; and the teaching profession needs to develop the disposition to take risks and welcome change rather than staying with proven procedures and comfortable routines. Knowledge Society schooling, in other words, demands that we cast aside the outdated 'grammars' of industrial and agrarian models of schooling (Hargreaves, 2009, p. 944).

What is somewhat more promising in the context of current secondary school policies in Brazil is the remarkable increase in numbers attending vocational courses (from 2.56% in 2004 to 6.88% in 2012), suggesting, accord-



ing to Neri and Oliveira (2012), that many young people are now seeking this alternative. Basically, young Brazilians, especially those from the poorer sectors of society, increasingly demand access to schools that provide vocational training courses and course programmes that can pave the way to a job.

The current growth trend in vocational course enrolment bears out the concerns raised in recent research on work-oriented education by Mona Mourshed, Diana Farrell and Dominic Barton of the McKinsey Center for Government. The resulting report claims that in today's world, young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than their parents. In countries such as South Africa, Spain and Greece, over half of the youth population is currently unemployed, while throughout the world, 75 million young people have no job. If the underemployed are also taken into consideration, this number is tripled. Thus, paradoxically, while a prodigious amount of untapped young talent goes to waste there exists a critical shortage of people with appropriate skills (Mourshed, Farrell & Barton, 2013). Countries' educational systems face an unprecedented challenge in this respect. Note, however, that the McKinsey Report targets mainly the type of knowledge required by the productive sector, relegating to second place a whole set of variables and values germane to education as part of the individual's right to enhance his potential and expand his vocational horizons.

Another factor of no less importance should be broached in the debate on youth education. The Western world is rooted in Greek rationality, which placed great value on work as an essential ingredient for guaranteeing the future of people and society and consolidating citizenship. Work thus plays a role in nurturing good citizens, and failure to provide young people with opportunities to better themselves through decent work severely curtails their development, preventing them from achieving their full potential. In the present circumstances, education for the world of work needs to help young people develop the skills and competencies that are vital for their ethical and social participation in public and private life as free, independent citizens.

The McKinsey research included a survey to gauge the opinion of young people and employers alike. It was found that that 58% of the former were convinced that practical learning was an effective approach from a training point of view, while only 24% of the students doing academic courses and 37% of students on vocational courses stated that they spent most of their time on practical activities. As for employers in the countries surveyed, around 4 out of 10 with available job vacancies reported that these remained unfilled



mainly due to the lack of skills possessed by recent school-leavers. Hence, there is a pressing need for effective two-way contact and coordination between the productive sectors and the schools. Such links could be fostered with the creation of state education / work forums, for example, that are designed to bring together representatives of the main stakeholders.

This type of liaison activity, in addition to boosting the formation of partnerships to undertake joint initiatives, would serve to narrow the gap between the hitherto traditionally distant universes of school and work, fostering understanding on both sides and providing opportunities to demonstrate that the responsibility for the acquisition of skills and competencies effectively falls to both parties. Schools are not always capable of keeping abreast of the impressive advances and speed of innovation in science and technology, and the proposed links between the productive sector and school would help to flesh out and fine tune training schedules to remedy this. It follows that a good general education, combining theory with an appreciation of practical applications and implications, would clearly make it easier for students to absorb new knowledge and knowhow at a faster rate. A salutary point worth noting: the two different worlds of academic and professional practitioners are increasingly aware that the quality of 'education for work' greatly depends on both. A further benefit of the proposed coordination is that school curricula planned on the basis of this scheme would help to enhance student motivation, reduce dropout rates and provide a boost to students employability – an indispensable attraction for young people struggling to find a decent job on leaving school. Finally, such an approach is essential for helping young people to cope with the cyclothymic fluctuations in the market that require employees to constantly change jobs.

Once these ideas on the relationship between the world of work and general academic education have been incorporated, it will be vital for governments to put 'education for work' at the very heart of youth policies, pressing for initiatives which, while they may not bring about all the structural changes that are needed, will nevertheless help to mitigate the crisis of youth unemployment. In this respect, the McKinsey Report contains invaluable information that cannot be ignored, including the surprising fact that of the sample of 8000 young people approached in nine countries¹, 70% were of the opinion that vocational schools were a path towards a decent job. A full 50% of the students

1 Germany, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, the United States, India, Morocco, Mexico, United Kingdom and Turkey.



thought that such training was preferable to struggling with academic subjects (Moursheld, Farrell & Barton, 2013). The problem is that, in most of the countries surveyed, including Brazil, technical and vocational studies continue to be looked down upon. Of the countries surveyed by McKinsey, Germany was the only one where students were convinced that academic and technical paths merited equal value. In Brazil's case, the encyclopedic tradition of Brazilian education, harshly criticized by Anísio Teixeira, remains, despite many advances, an obstacle to regarding schools more pragmatically as places that can provide young people with the tools to face adult life and work. The academic world is not always fully in tune with the problems young people face when trying to carve out a place for themselves in an increasingly competitive and exclusionary market society.

YOUTH POLICIES AND THE OMENS OF THE "BRAZILIAN AUTUMN"

Policymakers need to give top priority to youth unemployment. The current high rates, on the increase globally, may be heralding a 'lost generation', presaging adverse, long-term consequences both for young people seeking jobs and for various national economies (ILO 2012, 2013). Long-term, persistent joblessness at the beginning of a young person's adult life can have enduring consequences in terms of the loss of skills, reduced productivity and the resulting pressure on public finances. They are consequences from which it is difficult to recover.

However, Brazil has certainly managed to achieve some encouraging results in the youth policy area. The creation of a National Youth Secretariat, with ministerial status, and the National Youth Council in 2005, have been replicated by many of the states of the federation, which have established sectoral bodies, demonstrating that state governments are finally assuming their responsibilities in this urgent matter. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the recent approval of the Youth Statute (Law No. 12.852 of 5 August 2013) confirms that young people (including the handicapped) have a right to education and work, to technical and vocational education, and to culture and political participation.

However, given the existence of the different youth cohorts in Brazil, policies taking corrective and preventive action to promote access to decent

jobs need to be formulated that are firmly committed to and supervised by the states and municipalities, particularly in view of regional disparities and their various asymmetries. At present, a host of young people work informally, both in urban and rural areas, and the number of underage minors employed in less than decent conditions is striking.

The Brazilian Government has directed much attention to the problem of people doing informal work under poor conditions. According to the 2011 National Agenda for Decent Work, the Ministry of Labour and Employment (Brazil, Ministério do Trabalho, 2011), recognizing youth as one of the most significant periods of the life cycle and youth's potential role in helping to overcome current crises, has put forward proposals for a series of actions to ensure decent work as a precondition for overcoming poverty and reducing inequality. The above document also reports that adolescents and people in the 15 to 29 age bracket, either in work or seeking work, were assailed by numerous difficulties, especially that of trying to combine work and study. The National Agenda therefore advocates changes in the country's educational institutions to ensure that a minimum amount of training is given to help students make the transition from school to the world of work. It goes on to highlight the critical issue of young people from poor families starting work before the so-called 'legal' age and without having even completed their elementary school studies. As for working conditions, the document affirms that such individuals do indeed continue to endure precarious conditions at work and are not formally registered (as in the case of domestic servants). The latter category contains a high proportion of young (especially black) women. Pay is generally very low and the worker's situation is often compounded by health and safety problems encountered on the job. As for young people in the rural areas, high rates of illiteracy, poor school access, bad working conditions and the constant migration from one area to another to ensure a family's survival, point to the urgent need to deploy structural policies, such as pressing on with land reform and providing funding for productive activities (Brazil, Ministério do Trabalho, 2011).

The actions proposed by the Decent Work Agenda are important and necessary, but are unlikely to make significant inroads into the current situation. In this respect, the street demonstrations by young people in June 2013 (the "Brazilian Autumn") in various parts of the country were an indication of the pressing concerns affecting young people. There can be no doubt that the issue of youth employment is a massive problem worldwide. However,



a number of other bottlenecks also need to be considered. Mason Moseley's recent article on the youth protests in Brazil argues that the probability of demonstrations was predicted in an opinion poll conducted in 2012 by the US Vanderbilt University in 24 Latin American and Caribbean countries. The survey revealed that Brazilians were among the least satisfied with their public services and the least supportive of their own political system (Moseley, 2013).

The street protests were analyzed by a number of different experts who detected critical points that reflected discontent with broader issues: the demands for bus fare reductions were the trigger for provoking discussion on urgent questions affecting the future of society in Brazil; the basically non-ideological protests eschewed, according to Bernard Sorj (2013), party political participation (unlike many other demos in recent years which had substantial party political support); most of the protesters were apolitical or rejected both the governing and opposition parties; and distrust of the entire current political system (corrupt politicians, etc) was in evidence throughout the protests (Sorj, 2013). The demonstrations brought to mind the events in the early 1990s when, following the impeachment of President Collor de Mello, the Brazilian people, particularly the young, were hopeful of a new beginning, a new era guided by ethical principles and the commitment of leaders to the public good.

Yet despite limited success in some areas of public accountability and a number of collective achievements, the past twenty years have witnessed no substantive progress in fulfilling the promise of radical change. While the new generation has no experience of Brazil under the military dictatorship (1964-1985), it is abundantly aware of the country's situation over the past 20 years or so. A major step forward has been the advent of new technology, especially used by young people to engage in quiet discourse about the country's problems. Social networking is now so widespread that a teacher's remarks in the classroom or a doctor's discussion with a patient can be immediately posted on the Internet for all to read.

The demonstrations of mid-2013 showed that the population was unhappy with corruption, crime, unemployment, healthcare, the high price and inefficiency of public transport, and the quality of education. Disillusioned with national institutions and ongoing corruption in the political sphere, the new generation sensibly turned its back on political parties and trade unions. According to Franco:



The demonstrators wanted no contact with political parties because these were the very source of the corruption against which they were protesting: their leadership could not be seen to be hierarchical since they reject the oligarchization of politics; their demands focus on the rights they have been denied and for which they pay their taxes; they are not calling for ‘more’, as widely alleged, they simply want what is ‘essential’. They are not amorphous, thanks to the power of the social networks, which have succeeded in organizing vast groups calling for action (Franco, 2013, p. A3).

The rejection of party political interference in the demonstrations was an interesting departure from the norm. Lafer and Siqueira (2013, p. A3) recall Castell’s recent reference to an observation by Ruth Cardoso (2005) that he considered brilliant and prophetic: “disunited people will never be vanquished”. Castell argues that it is the multiplicity of sources of social change, not the machinations of the political apparatus, that will undermine the roots of supremacy. There can be little doubt that one of the features of the protests (in contrast to Cohn-Bendit’s leadership of the student protests in Paris) was precisely the absence of clear leadership. As the protests wore on, a diverse group of the more outspoken individuals coalesced *ad hoc*, brought together by their desire for a better country, with governments ethically committed to urgently needed changes. Echoing this observation, the Italian journalist/sociologist Paolo Gerbaudo (a respected researcher on popular movements from Kings College London) said, in an interview with Bernardo Franco, that the key demand of the June protests was for a new form of democracy in which political parties were not confined to appealing to the populace only once every four years and thereafter doing nothing. Recalling the short-lived campaigns of the Occupy Wall Street movement and the *indignados* in Spain, he went on to argue that given the lack of a formal structure, it was not possible to maintain long-term mass mobilization in Brazil. He did, however, point to the possibility of a “Brazilian Autumn” resurfacing under a series of new guises, reflecting the revolutionary times through which Brazil and other countries (e.g. Egypt) are passing, and during which people feel they can make a difference (Gerbaudo, 2013).

It is too early to predict whether the protests in Brazil will lead to a more permanent movement or political project with clear goals and targets. Many useful lessons remain to be learned by the so-called political élites running the country, one of the most important being, as highlight-



ed by Pastore, that Brazil has shown the world that a significant portion of the population does not concur with recent opinion polls classifying Brazilians as the ‘world’s happiest people’, and that pollsters should henceforth pay closer attention to the real feelings of their subjects (Pastore, 2013). It follows that good quality opinion research to explore the deeper subjective space of young people is vital for formulating appropriate public policies. For the moment, it is an illusion, for example, to go on thinking that government-organized welfare policies such as the *Bolsa Família*, *Primeiro Emprego* (First Job), and others with ephemeral results, will stand the test of time. The street protests left a clear message that, while undoubtedly such programmes are necessary, they are in reality only the first steps toward deeper structural changes.

CONCLUSION

This is perhaps an appropriate moment to conclude with some provisional, albeit necessary, observations. In these times of uncertainty, common sense dictates that prudence must prevail. The introduction to the present article highlighted that the crisis of youth unemployment cannot be viewed separately from current development models which have proved increasingly incapable of generating quality of life improvements for a vast part of the population. The key aim was to draw urgent attention to the subject of youth employment and signal that this should be considered seriously in the context of the social, economic and cultural challenges currently facing our country. Although approaches to this problem are still less than promising, enough evidence exists to show that the future direction of employment policy for young people needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. In this respect, the philosopher Slavoj Žižek argued in a recent interview that the world is fast approaching a point where a common, cohesive position needs to be carefully considered and adopted. The events in New York, the Middle East, Greece, Spain and elsewhere created a void in current hegemonic ideology. Efforts to fill this void present the world with a unique and fruitful opportunity to move forward to something genuinely new (Žižek, 2013, pp. 641-642). We can be sure that, in the pursuit of a truly new scenario, young people will emerge as essential stakeholders with a prominent role to play. Public policies to ensure good education and decent jobs for our youth will



go down in history as a sound investment in Brazil's future. Our leaders are therefore called upon to play their part in this historic venture. Otherwise, they risk being written out of history.

REFERENCES

- ANUÁRIO BRASILEIRO DE EDUCAÇÃO. (2013). *Todos pela Educação*. S. Paulo: Moderna. Retrieved April 2013, from <http://www.todospelaeducacao.org.br/biblioteca/1479/anuario-brasileiro-da-educacao-basica-2013/>.
- BRASIL. MINISTÉRIO DO TRABALHO. (2011). *Agenda do trabalho decente*. Brasília: Ministério do Trabalho.
- CUÉLLAR, J. P. (1997). *Nossa diversidade criadora*. Brasília: Unesco; S. Paulo: Papirus.
- FRANCO, M. S. C. (2013, July 15). Armadilhas para Dilma. *Folha de S.Paulo*, Caderno A 12, 15/7/2013.
- FURTER, P. (1967). *Juventude e tempo presente*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.
- GERBAUDO, P. (2013, July 8). Objetivo de manifestações é nova forma de democracia. Entrevista a Bernardo M. Franco. *Folha de S.Paulo*, 8/7/2013.
- GOMES, C. A., CAPANEMA, C., LEAL, H., & CÂMARA, J. (2011, Janeiro/Abril). Ensino médio: decifra-me ou eu te devoro. *Rio, Boletim Técnico do Senac*, (49-59), 37.
- HARDT, M., & NEGRI, A. (2001). *Império*. (2^o edição). Rio de Janeiro: Record.
- HARGREAVES, A. (2009). Pedagogical and educational change for sustainable knowledge societies. In R. Cowen, A. Kazamias & E. Unterhalter (Eds.), *International handbook of comparative education* (p. 944). London: Springer.
- ILO (2012). *The youth employment crisis: time for action*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- ILO (2013). *Global employment trends*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- INEP (n.d.). *Portal INEP*. Retrieved from <http://www.inep.gov.br>.
- KRUGMAN, P. A. (2013, July 1). Guerra contra os desempregados. *Folha de S. Paulo (online)*, 1/07/2013.



- LAFER, C. E., & SIQUEIRA, R. (2013, July 10). Ruth Cardoso: contemporânea. *Folha de S.Paulo*, Caderno Ap3, 10/7/2013.
- MADEIRA, F. R. (2006). *Educação e desigualdade no tempo da juventude*. Rio de Janeiro: Ipea.
- MARCUSE, H. (2007). *El hombre unidimensional*. Barcelona: Ariel.
- MORIN, E., LEFORT, C., & CASTORIADIS, C. (2008). *Mai 68 – La Brèche*. Paris: Fayard.
- MOSELEY, M. (2013). *Prosperidad e protestos en Brasil*. Simon,s Site. Retrieved from <http://www.schwartzman.org.br/sitesimon/?lang=en-us>.
- MOURSHED, M., FARRELL, D., & BARTON, D. (2013). *Educação para o trabalho: desenhando um sistema que funcione*. S. Paulo: Mckinzev.
- NÉRI, M., & OLIVEIRA, L. F. B. (2012). Frequência escolar entre 15 e 17 anos: fluxo e motivação. In *Documento institucional do movimento Todos pela Educação: De olho nas metas* (pp. 104-112). São Paulo: TPE-Moderna.
- PASTORE, J. (2013, June 29). Dos protestos ao movimento Social. *Correio Brasileiro*, Caderno I, 29/6/2013, p. 17.
- SEN, A. K. (2000). *Desenvolvimento como liberdade*. S. Paulo: I.A.Senna-Companhia das Letras.
- SORJ, B. (2013). *A política alem da internet*. Simon,s Site. Retrieved from <http://www.schwartzman.org.br/sitesimon/?lang=en-us>.
- TODOS PELA EDUCAÇÃO. (2013). *De olho nas metas 2012*. S. Paulo: Editora Moderna. Retrieved May 2013, from <http://www.todospelaeducacao.org.br/biblioteca/1476/de-olho-nas-metas-2012>.
- UNESCO (1975). *Droits et Responsabilités des Jeunes*. Bruxelles: Way-Cenic.
- ZIZEK, S. (2013). *Menos que nada: Hegel e a sombra do materialismo dialético*. S. Paulo: Boitempo.