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YOUTH: THE RIGHT TO A PLACE IN THE SUN?

Edited by

ALI A. ABDI, CANDIDO ALBERTO GOMES,
CÉLIO DA CUNHA & RANILCE GUIMARÃES-IOSIF



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Sisyphus – Journal of Education aims to be a place for debate on political, social, economic, cultural, historical, curricular and organizational aspects of education. It pursues an extensive research agenda, embracing the opening of new conceptual positions and criteria according to present tendencies or challenges within the global educational arena.

The journal publishes papers displaying original researches – theoretical studies and empiric analysis – and expressing a wide variety of methods, in order to encourage the submission of both innovative and provocative work based on different orientations, including political ones. Consequently, it does not stand by any particular paradigm; on the contrary, it seeks to promote the possibility of multiple approaches. The editors will look for articles in a wide range of academic disciplines, searching for both clear and significant contributions to the understanding of educational processes. They will accept papers submitted by researchers, scholars, administrative employees, teachers, students, and well-informed observers of the educational field and correlative domains. Additionally, the journal will encourage and accept proposals embodying unconventional elements, such as photographic essays and artistic creations.

Youth: The Right to a Place in the Sun?

Introduction by *Ali A. Abdi, Candido Alberto Gomes, Célio da Cunha & Ranilce Guimarães-Iosif (Editors)*

One of the most crucial issues today is that of economic growth without a corresponding increase in jobs, especially jobs for youth. The problem is especially acute in countries still affected by the 2008 economic crisis, whose already waning economies have been exacerbated by substantial government and company job cuts. The unemployment queues naturally include a large number of younger people. Yet even when the economic climate was more favourable, young people had already come to realize that securing employment was not only difficult, but often impossible.

As a result, today's youth have begun to realize that the investment both they and their parents made in their education is unlikely to produce a corresponding financial return. What we have now, therefore, is a high percentage of young people who are not studying, training or working.

With the above-mentioned scenario as a backdrop, this issue of *Sisyphus* focuses on today's global youth, with special emphasis on youth education and employment. As the cross-disciplinary literature reveals, the world's population is rapidly ageing – a fact that will undoubtedly give rise to a series of demographic, economic, social and educational changes. It is noteworthy, for example, that this is the first time in history that population dynamics are playing, – and will continue to play – such a dramatic and pivotal role in such a short period of time. Population growth in many parts

of the world (with average life spans increasing even in the least developed countries), together with a number of other factors (economic crises, etc.), jeopardizes young people's hopes of assuming their roles as parents, active citizens, and, above all, productive members of the work force. In other words, their hopes of finding a place in the sun have begun to dim.

From childhood, today's youth have been encouraged to play a leading role in modern society. Adolescents, both in school and outside school, have developed their own cultural patterns which, to a large extent, have been influenced by market interests. Utopian and pragmatic expectations of earning a place in the sun, arguably a basic human right, have consequently risen during this second decade of the 21st century.

In many countries, this is the best-educated generation ever, since it has benefitted from ideals that espouse education-for-all in terms of access, quality, and equity. Paradoxically, however, today's youth have become synonymous with unemployment and poverty, especially youth in the developing world. The collective forces of the market, society, and politics have seemingly shut out – and often stifled – youth's hopes, expectations and ambitions, even though countries urgently need to prepare their youth for the difficult challenges of a rapidly ageing population. The generational transition could well be threatened by the widening gap between a burgeoning group of people who are likely to live much longer, and a restless younger generation that has been denied its rightful place in society.

There are few solid prospects in view when it comes to ameliorating the current situation, which is why the challenges must be heeded by policy makers, educators and other stakeholders. The academic world stands to play an important role in this debate. It is in this spirit that *Sisyphus – Journal of Education* has devoted this issue to youth and the many challenges it faces.

This issue contains four parts. Part one features two wide-ranging articles: Gomes traces the major demographic, economic and educational obstacles facing youth, while Cowen, with his ecumenical experience, discusses the principles and objectives of today's changing universities. While higher education is still seen by many as the key to social mobility and personal development, it is now often becoming a disappointment to young people, who find that the stairway to upward mobility is often long and arduous.

The articles in part two defy current stereotypes that portray today's youth as alienated individuals who show no interest in politics and prefer to worship at the altar of consumerism. The papers on citizenship and social participa-

tion by Abdi and Shultz, Mutch and Zyngier shed considerable light on reality, helping to dispel many of the myths. Abdi and Shultz focus on Canada, while Mutch discusses youth participation during the 2010-11 earthquakes in New Zealand. Continuing the world tour in the Southern Hemisphere, Zyngier addresses educators' beliefs directly by exploring the motives and beliefs of future teachers in relation to citizenship and democracy in Australia.

Part three follows the same topical line as part two, but broadens the scope to include the critical issues of education and employment, i.e. preparation for and attainment of adulthood, and how achieving full adulthood is seriously constrained nowadays by a lengthy waiting time. In this vein, Law and Xu present a picture of the People's Republic of China and the changes taking place there. Still further westward, Ashraf, Ali and Hosain examine the relationship between youth and education in one of the most geopolitically sensitive areas of the world – Pakistan. Swanson, in turn, focuses on a populational group in which hopes and disappointments coexist: the unemployed youth of post-apartheid South Africa.

The fourth and final part centers on Brazil, the largest and most populous country in Latin America. Pastore opens with his views on education, employment and development. Although he focuses primarily on his own country, the content of his article is nevertheless of more wide-ranging importance. The last part also includes an article by Cunha and Guimarães-Iosif on the same topic, and another by Castro, Torres and França on the secondary school crisis and its victims. While the papers draw on Brazilian data, they also induce us to consider the role of schooling in general and the way in which, in unequal societies, school can turn out to be a perverse socio-cultural filter.

The provocative viewpoints of the authors, who hail from five different continents, urge us to reflect on the issues and problems facing youth that must be addressed here and now. It is clear that with respect to youth – to use a metaphor – we can no longer speak of sowing good seeds (policies in favor of younger children) in order to reap a bountiful harvest (a productive, fulfilling adulthood) because in adolescence, the maturation process is constantly beset by storms and blights that could decimate the harvest at the end of the day. The challenges go far beyond electoral cycles, although these do play a part.

Failing to respond adequately to the many challenges may endanger both present and future generations. Indeed, the price that will be paid for the errors and omissions we commit today could be extremely high.



YOUTH: THE RIGHT TO A PLACE IN THE SUN

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ABSTRACT

Changing population patterns aggravated by the financial crisis unleashed in 2008 reveal altered population dynamics that include increased longevity, population ageing and an expanding moratorium on youth. As generations that are more markedly defined sociologically take shape, a population bulge of young people awaiting work opportunities and the chance to become productive adults has now formed that demonstrates revolutionary potential. The transformations underway are leading to a re-dimensioning of traditional intergenerational resource transfers and underscoring the vulnerability of the various generations, particularly the adult generation, which is under increased pressure. In this context, education appears to be a dead end in several countries, since it no longer functions as a means toward social ascension. The over-rated value of the diplomas being conferred has become apparent and contrasts sharply with societies that are actually dedicated to reducing jobs and making employment increasingly precarious. It is a crisis scenario in which the legitimacy of education is seriously being questioned.

KEY WORDS

Youth; Demographics; Labour; Education.



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Youth: The Right to a Place in the Sun¹

Candido Alberto Gomes

In memory of Amanda, pole star,
celestial anchor in the navigation of the known
and the unknown.

INTRODUCTION

The millennial dynamics of the human species involves generational succession whereby adults prepare the new members of society for the future, grow old and then gradually withdraw from the scene, while the youths grow into adulthood and become full-scale protagonists. This cycle has been as dependable as the rising and setting of the sun, and has only been broken by natural or man-made catastrophes such as the crushing defeat inflicted on peoples by war. Now, however, the times seem to have heralded the advent of a generational abyss of a different kind. The prolongation of human life and other factors such as job cuts have seemingly prolonged the limbo of youth. Although today's youth have been better schooled and prepared than their forebears, their entrance into adulthood, typified by the constitution of new families in which they are the main protagonists, is being increasingly postponed. Admittedly, this new generation has a lot to teach its predecessors, and could transform the monologue that once prevailed into a dialogue. Yet adults are being called on to maintain their offspring longer so that their children eventually acquire the means to retire. Worse yet, there are some

¹ Thanks are due to Prof. Ivar César Oliveira de Vasconcelos for his kind critique of the text and the elaboration of some of the calculations. Any limitations, however, must be attributed to the author.

among the elderly who would prefer to see their deaths hastened in order to benefit society at large, as said by Japan's finance minister (Hills, 2013).

This unprecedented rupture seems to have intensified following the global financial crisis that began in 2008. It has shaken a generation that fully expected to achieve inter-generational ascension, since it enjoyed a longer period of formal schooling; instead, it now finds itself facing the reality of unemployment and precarious work. It is highly significant that this scenario, for which some writers blame the "laws" of the market, along with the desire of some to see the elderly usher themselves out of this world, stands in stark contrast to human rights, a concept that seems to be fading the farther we drift from the post-war period and enter a formerly unexpected dystopia. If this "lost" generation is to fully enjoy its human rights, these rights, in sum, will include the right to a place in the sun, not just for personal benefit, but to avoid the unprecedented societal suffering that may come about from the rupture of a type of generational succession that has been in place since pre-history.

This introductory text seeks to delineate the profile of the current situation, its unprecedented risks and some of the social-educational implications it harbours. It is the educators' job to be highly aware of developments taking place in their fields so that they are able to assess the transformations that are taking place in the present and those that are likely to come about in the near future. In effect the evidence shows that educators' Sisyphian efforts are becoming increasingly painful, subject as they are to new and uncertain routines.

SISYPHUS & JANUS

Although Sisyphus's torment may be worsening, we may be somewhat heartened by looking into the past as a way of dissipating the mists that envelop us. In this respect Janus, the god of portals and doorways, invites us, in his literally two-faced capacity, to look back and to look forward. As we straddle the threshold of the two doorways it would be well to remember some palaeographic data and demographic history. Research informs us that early hominids rarely lived longer than forty years. Thirteenth century English aristocrats who managed to live past the age of 21 could expect an additional 43.1 years of life. In the middle of the Enlightenment, life expectancy in

France was just 43.1 years. In the United States from 1900 to 1902 it was no more than 49.2 years, but by 2007-11 it had jumped to 78 (Gomes, 2012). While it is admittedly risky to generalise, it is fairly safe to assert that the movement that expanded the populational accordion ended up giving rise, at least in the West, to our current concepts of childhood and youth and to the definition of numerous stages to categorise – not only youth – but old age as well. The asymmetrical stretching of the age-group accordion, first of all cuts childhood short, or according to Postman (1994) leads to its disappearance altogether. The expanded adolescence that follows ends in an ambiguous period of change that is typified by a marked postponement of the moment when the youth is to assume typical adult responsibilities such as working at a relatively stable job, establishing a conjugal relationship, having children and maintaining one's own household. Galland (1997) calls this period post-adolescence and it consists of a prolongation of the period of waiting and expectation, often occupied by efforts to acquire higher schooling levels in the frequently frustrated hopes of obtaining a better future. Authors like Arnett (2004) prefer the term “emergent adulthood” and they describe it as a dilated period of self-focusing and exploring possibilities throughout one's twenties, but also as a phenomenon that is geographically, culturally and socially determined.

Focusing his analysis on the United States, Arnett also explains that this stage is linked to the fragility of the job scenario that has come about as a result of economic globalization, deindustrialization and the exportation of employment positions. It is a reality that contrasts sharply with that of the past when, upon finishing high school, young people were in a position to set up their own families and raise children. The situation begs the question: what came first, the chicken or the egg? Did the prolonged period of waiting arise from the socio-cultural and educational conditions or is it the result of the shrinking field of jobs and the fragility of employment conditions? If the latter case is true, does it mean that schooling, right up to its highest levels, plays the leading role in a farce designed merely to pass the time and promote false hopes of social insertion?

These new rites of passage, with their comings and goings, unlike the rites of yesteryear, most certainly benefit increased consumption, whilst the young, as confirmed consumers, after forcibly leaving behind their life as chrysalises, seem never to get beyond the butterfly stage. Instead, they flit from flower to flower for as long as someone is prepared to finance them or,



which is rarer, for as long as they finance themselves. This labyrinth of disillusionment is fertile ground for a generation that neither works nor studies. As research progresses into inter-generational transfer of resources, it has become clear that someone needs to finance the generation that is ageing and its respective successors. However, having verified that the gates are closed (and have been locked even tighter since the 2008 crisis), the young have had to find spaces to stagnate in, even though, since early childhood, they have been urged to be more precocious, independent and pro-active about their own lives. Thus, it comes as no surprise that some, unable to access the scintillating world of consumerism, have vented their frustrations by taking part in rebellious, splinter movements in which burning cars and buildings and looting shops is the order of the day. The whole scenario intensifies the overall feeling of fear and instils in these youth the impression that they have become the “extradited members of an underclass” (Bauman, 2011).

AN AGEING WORLD VS. YOUNG PEOPLE IN LIMBO

Long-term statistical forecasting regarding population is not known for its precision. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that such extrapolations are useful insofar as they manage to indicate probable direction. Table 1 delineates the profile of a world with a smaller population of children, adolescents and young people and adults and a much larger population of the elderly, who are expected to quadruple by 2020. The future also promises to show a concentration of population in the world's least developed regions. In the year 2000, there was one inhabitant in the developed regions for every five global inhabitants. This ratio is expected to go to one for every eight by the eve of the 22nd century (table 1). At the extreme end of the ageing gradient, in 50 years Europe can expect to see its percentage of older people triple. Its overall population will diminish through to 2100 with children and adolescents making up only 14.6% of the population (using current classifications for the terms) in 2050. Portugal, in turn, is expected to lose one third of its present population by 2100 and become a country in which about one third of the population is elderly. By the year 2050, it is predicted that the Portuguese population of 14 and under will reach its minimum level of 12.5%. The 15 to 64 age group will end up predominating at 53.5%.

TABLE 1 - POPULATION PROFILE BY AGE IN CHANGE, 2000-2200

Age groups (years)	2000	2050	2100	2150	2200
WORLD					
0-14	30.1	20.1	16.4	16.5	16.5
15-64	63.0	64.0	59.2	56.0	54.7
65+	6.9	15.9	24.4	27.5	28.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Millions	6,071	8,919	9,064	8,494	8,596
MORE DEVELOPED REGIONS					
0-14	18.3	15.7	16.9	16.4	15.7
15-64	67.4	58.4	55.5	54.4	52.4
65+	14.3	25.9	27.7	29.3	31.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Millions	1,194	1,220	1,131	1,161	1,207
LESS DEVELOPED REGIONS					
0-14	33.0	20.8	16.4	16.5	16.6
15-64	61.9	64.9	59.7	56.2	55.1
65+	5.1	14.3	23.9	27.2	28.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Millions	4,877	7,699	7,933	7,333	7,291
EUROPE					
0-14	17.5	14.8	17.0	16.5	15.9
15-64	67.8	57.3	56.1	55.0	52.8
65+	14.7	27.9	26.9	28.5	31.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Millions	728.0	631.9	538.4	550.4	573.7
PORTUGAL					
0-14	16.2	12.5	15.4
15-64	67.6	53.5	54.0
65+	16.2	34.0	30.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Millions	10,016	9,027	7,335	7,401	7,729

Source: United Nations (2004). Projections: medium variant. Portugal: population by age: UN, Population Division (2004), *World Population Prospects: the 2010 Revision*, pp. 22, 27-8, 49, 68, 233-5.



It is clear, therefore, that the revolution in course is affecting all sectors, altering the focus of production, consumption, taxation, and public and private transfers by age groups. With regard to education, schools are expected to be virtually or totally empty or hobble on throughout the period of youth as institutions with thinly disguised custodial functions. That is, if they manage to survive up till then at all, somewhat like old remnants sewn onto a new piece of cloth.

Obliged, as they will be, to break down time-honoured bureaucratic barriers, educational institutions will find themselves in a position where they not only have to attract and retain young people for much longer periods of time, but also identifying and addressing the needs of adults and the elderly throughout the course of their lives, which involves providing vocational education. All of these changes will alter the direction of research and teacher education. At this point, adults and old people are the huge X factor of the equation – unknown yet increasingly indispensable – and it will be important to analyse how they learn best and what they actually want to learn. Scenarios can be envisaged wherein the demands of those protagonists being educated will override whatever “mature” generations have prescribed for the “immature ones” (Durkheim, 1968). The future may well oblige continents to learn to live with the shrinking of their economic activities and renounce sacrosanct concepts such as the continuous growth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is calculated on the basis of supposedly aggregated wealth. This would be, however, without subtracting the value of natural resources they consume, especially the non-renewable resources.

The populational horizon appears both bright and gloomy. Will declining population lead to less consumption, lower productivity and profits and an overall deterioration in the fiscal situation? Will it imply less military, political and civil power? Are there, at the same time, prospects for a better capital-to- population ratio and a reduction in the costs caused by congestion and overcrowding? The knowledge generation and technological innovation are positive factors, but which countries will be privy to them? (Coleman & Rowthorn, 2011; Eberstadt, 2010). Do all of these doubts spring from a process that has only just started?

On a worldwide scale, the youth dependency threshold has tended to increase and will be at age 27 by the year 2200. The elderly dependency threshold will go up from age 54 to age 79 in the course of two centuries. In just half a century, post-retirement duration is expected to drop from 11.8 years to 8.7

and only overtake the year 2000 figure again in 2200. Even when the data are broken down in line with the economies that are more or less developed, one sees a noticeable convergence of tendencies with regard to population ageing. In Europe, the youth dependency threshold will reach its height of age 29 in the year 2050, while the dependency threshold for the elderly will jump from age 65 to 75 in just half a century and by 2200 reach the age mark of 82. Social welfare problems are hidden by the figures for post-retirement duration, which in Europe will tend to fall only to increase again later, reflecting the probable cycles of overburdening and relief in the relations between beneficiaries and contributors of various generations.

Different parts of the world are displaying situations of either demographic dividend or debt, the former being a result of fewer children and adolescents linked to a proportional increase in the numbers of productive adults before the group of old people has begun to expand. The latter is due to the adult group's diminishing birth rates because of the high cost of raising children, while at the same time, longevity and the number of elderly are increasing. In Europe, the dividend has already been spent, while in Africa it is just beginning.

In the midst of the demographic debt, aggravated by crises like the one sparked in 2008, and in the presence of a decline in fertility and birth rates, a population bottleneck has been formed. In short, there is a bulge of young people awaiting their turn for a place in the sun, while the older generations struggle to maintain theirs while enjoying the fruits of a social security system they have contributed to over their lifetimes (tables 2 and 3). Unfortunately, such bulges are liable to generate political violence when waiting gives way to desperation. The sense of hopelessness is fuelled by factors such as the size of the bulge and a youth gender ratio in which males predominate in the respective age groups involved (Urdal, 2012). Indeed, the world as a whole and the less developed regions alike tend to have a higher ratio of youths to adults, which may decline somewhat over time, but will nonetheless continue to remain high.

TABLE 2 - DEPENDENCY THRESHOLD AGES AND POST-RETIREMENT DURATION,
2000-2200

Area/region	2000	2050	2100	2200
WORLD				
Young dependency threshold*	14	22	26	27
Old dependency threshold**	54	66	74	79
Post-retirement duration***	11.8	8.7	9.0	13.0
MORE DEVELOPED REGIONS				
Young dependency threshold*	23	27	26	28
Old dependency threshold**	65	75	78	82
Post-retirement duration***	11.0	7.5	10.7	13.9
LESS DEVELOPED REGIONS				
Young dependency threshold*	13	21	27	27
Old dependency threshold**	50	65	73	78
Post-retirement duration***	13.4	9.2	8.8	12.9
EUROPE				
Young dependency threshold*	24	29	26	28
Old dependency threshold**	65	75	77	82
Post-retirement duration***	9.0	5.7	10.3	13.7

Source: United Nations, 2004, p. 75.

* Age at which dependency must end if young dependents are to be limited to less than 30% of the population.

** The earliest possible retirement age if old dependents are to be limited to less than 15% of the population.

*** Difference between life expectancy and the retirement threshold age.



TABLE 3 - YOUTH BULGE: PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH POPULATION OVER ADULT POPULATION,
2000-2100

Region/Years	2000	2025	2050	2100
World	45.7	30.3	27.0	25.4
More developed regions	41.1	31.9	35.5	38.2
Less developed regions	43.2	31.9	27.5	25.4
Africa	59.2	49.5	39.7	28.5
Europe	41.1	29.6	33.1	37.9
Portugal	44.4	28.1	27.4	35.5

Source of the original data: UN, Population Division estimates, 2010 Revision.

Youth defined as the 15-24 year age group for the world, less developed regions and Africa.

Adult population defined as the 25-64 year age group for the same regions.

Youth defined as the 15-29 year age group for more developed regions, Europe and Portugal.

Adult population defined as the 30-69 year age group for the same regions.

The panorama is further complicated because economies and technologies have emerged that increasingly require less and less manpower, and especially less manpower engaged in steady employment, which is the basis of funding social welfare initiatives. In addition, the bottleneck keeps getting narrower because job creation is slower than the economic expansion when the latter actually does occur. It should also be noted that just as income groups do not necessarily form social classes, age groups do not automatically constitute conscious generations (Mannheim, 2011) with their own clear objectives. Thus, certain situations may explode into destructive movements with little leadership, similar to the European riots of recent memory or the revolutionary upheavals of the 60s.

LOSSES AND GAINS: NATIONAL TRANSFER ACCOUNTS

The relationships involved are so complex that systematic research has been undertaken into the intergenerational transfer of resources. The age groups that consume income rather than generate it have been identified as child-



hood and old age. Between the two lies the age group of adults. Income not only meets this group's needs but stretches to provide transfers to both the young and the old.

Three resource situations are linked to this sequence of groups: deficit, surplus and deficit again, in old age. The Net Intergenerational Transfers (NIT) project (Lee & Mason, 2011) found that in 2010, there were 23 aged economies. By 2040, there will be 89, and by 2070, 155. According to their study, somewhere around the middle of this century, most of the adult group's resources will actually be devoted to their predecessors. Although it is not the intention of this work to enter into details, some points must be highlighted:

1) The age group consisting of the elderly is not necessarily a deadweight. They may actually give rise to another form of demographic dividend since, as happens in Spain (Paxtot, Rentería, Sánchez-Romero & Souto, 2011), they contribute to co-financing young people by, among other things, living with them and looking after their grandchildren. Of course this scenario depends on the compression of morbidity and may even involve extending the time that old people work. Thus, the elderly may not necessarily represent an impediment to economic growth. However, a dilemma may arise in this case: should resources be channelled to the children, adolescents and young people and used essentially for their health and education, or should they be funnelled to the elderly and used mainly for health care? These options, however, are not necessarily mutually exclusive in all circumstances.

2) The demographic dividend makes a significant contribution to economic growth, since having fewer children means that they will receive more resources and obtain better health care and education. In other words, the workers offer will be more satisfactory. However, in some societies like India, the lack of adequate preparation means that youngsters have low levels of employability (Chandrasekhar, Ghosh & Roychowdury, 2006). The bulge there means that on the labour supply side, while there are indeed more young people, they are not necessarily endowed with health, education or employability. On the demand side, however, what needs to be questioned is the creation of jobs and their quality, and what technologies and economic decisions should guide vocational structuring and the public and private capacity to allocate resources. Again, the existence of a large, young population that is supposedly better prepared does not necessarily mean that the demographic dividend will result in collective or individual benefits. The very abundance of available youngsters may create a queue for jobs in which

only the more “interesting” are actually employed, thereby boosting frustration among the throngs of remaining job-seekers.

3) Getting back to the three stages of life, it has been noted that in developed regions young people have had to wait longer for their turn, especially in times of economic crisis. Their dependence on their forebears is prolonged; and the time to form their own families is delayed. There are deleterious effects caused by long periods of precarious employment, unemployment and attempting to avoid the consequences of a bad beginning that might jeopardise their future careers. The powerful, far-reaching effects of the first job on a person’s career have long been known (Blau & Duncan, 1967). One of the results of this state of affairs is the possible shortening of the period of income/consumption surplus experienced by adults which, in turn, may have a negative impact on their retirement. Indeed, Lai (2011) has pointed out two important moments in the lives of young people: the moment of financial independence and the moment of economic self-sufficiency. In the case of the former, the age when labour income exceeds private consumption. In the case of the moment of economic self-sufficiency, the age when labour income exceeds total consumption. In Spain and the United States, those two moments occur at age 24 and 26 respectively. In Germany, they occur at 24 and 27. At the opposite extreme, in Senegal, these ages were determined to be 33 and 35; in Nigeria 31 and 32; in Indonesia, 27 and 29; and in Brazil, 25 and 30. The data seem to suggest that waiting periods differ among countries with different income levels, but not in the way one might expect. What can be said of Senegal, Nigeria, Indonesia and Brazil is that young people have to go through a painful rite of passage and overcome many obstacles to obtain any kind of employment that is not inherently precarious. In these countries, the widespread use of child and adolescent labour degrades prevailing labour conditions and wage levels so that even when young people are employed, their modest, unstable incomes can barely cover their private consumption or guarantee their economic self-sufficiency.

Thus, it would seem that the condition of youth is one of burdens. Some of these burdens are shared by all and vary only in the degree and nature of the precariousness of employment, the relatively low level of income, unemployment and underemployment, and devoting oneself to studying during the waiting period, which may be full-time or in tandem with work. There is also the other situation in which the individual neither studies nor works. If, as a result of national and social circumstances, the time young people

are obliged to spend before they can become full-fledged adults (something that for some of them will not even come to pass at all) has been greatly protracted, then, given the population dynamics described above, the consequences can be serious indeed (chart 1).

CHART 1 - SOME EFFECTS OF THE LONG WAIT IMPOSED ON YOUTH

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	WORKING AGE GROUP	OLD DEPENDENTS
<p>Tendency to decrease ← in an indirect manner < fertility and birth rate.</p> <p>Consume over a longer period.</p> <p>Produce little ← precarious employment, low wages.</p> <p>Prolonged schooling, nevertheless, tendency to decreasing return on it.</p> <p>School has a merely custodial function.</p> <p>Longer period in the parental household.</p> <p>Child birth postponed ← < fertility and birth rate.</p> <p>Financing the consumption/production deficit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - need for greater public finance transfers whose main constraints are: - unemployment benefit constraints; - limitations to public financing for health and education. - Need for bigger private inter and intra-household transfers → deterioration of conditions in low-income categories. 	<p>Decreasing percentage in view of population ageing.</p> <p>When employed, produce more than they consume.</p> <p>Make private inter and intra-household financial transfers (to children and adolescents) over a longer period.</p> <p>Make private inter and intra-household financial transfers directly to their antecedents or through tax channels (old people) and also forever a longer period of time due to increased longevity of old people</p> <p>Need to generate greater income and savings to cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - own consumption; - offspring's consumption; - antecedents' consumption; - own retirement. <p>Tend to work for a longer period due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - generalised longevity increase; - changes in social security regulations; - need to cover the longer waiting period of young people (smaller and later returns on investments under their care). <p>Tendency to decreased income when economy slows down.</p> <p>Significant difficulty in getting a job when over a certain age.</p>	<p>Increasing proportion of the total population.</p> <p>Consume more than they produce.</p> <p>Financing the deficit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - income from work (when employed); - re-allocation of assets accumulated over their lifetime's; - private inter and intra-household transfers; - other private transfers (e.g. philanthropic institutions); - public transfers; <p>According to culture and other conditions may make private inter or intra-household transfers to younger generations.</p>

In the past the adult generation has always formed the pivot. However, it is presently being squeezed at either end by the younger and older generations. Furthermore, it seems that an intergenerational trench is being dug as a result of the unprecedented delay in the younger generation's taking on the roles of adult life and the burgeoning bulge formed by the bottleneck that has obstructed their entry into the world of work. In addition to the stigma associated with precarious forms of employment, which marks people for the rest of their careers (Chauvel, 2010; Letablier & Sales, 2013), young people may be obliged to endure increasingly long periods of dependence until they are called on to occupy whatever positions have become vacant through the gradual passage of the adult generation into old age.

The whole process is conducted under the aegis of the educational function of "seed sowing" which, with the active collaboration of educators, has promoted the notion that acquiring more education will serve as a social "leg up". Obviously, young people will be conditioned by the variety of socio-economic realities in which they live (Pais, 1990). What then can one expect of this generation that lives with precariousness, and a culture of idleness in which the time is passed, devoid of hope or expectation and fraught with the despair that uncertainty has brought about? How will this generation be able to take its place in the sun after such a prolonged moratorium, and after having left school so long ago?

On the other hand, the glaring insufficiencies that have been noted, especially since the 2008 onset of the crisis, reveal how poorly the "seed sowing" has worked, because children living in the European Union today now comprise the age group that is most threatened by poverty and social exclusion (López Vilaplana, 2013). The situation has arisen against a backdrop of social moratorium in which no direct relationship has been established between precarious employment and fertility. It is rather a relationship that has been oriented by various factors such as each country's social policies.

Could all of this presage a downward spiral in which masses of young people are careening toward social disadvantage? Given the steady contraction of the "protected" labour market, which at this point still honours labour and social security rights, what chance will the squeezed generation have to save up and provide for its own old age? Indeed, the period of surplus after consumption seems to be relatively short: 27 years in Spain and 28 in Chile (Bravo & Holtz, 2011; Patxot, Rentería, Sánchez-Romero & Souto, 2011). How will these developments impact the fragile webs of social solidarity?



And how will they affect education? If available resources are shrinking and returns on supposed investments in schooling are increasingly disappointing, those who were formerly interested in education may easily become disinterested in the near future. With the yawning socio-economic and socio-cultural gap that separates the generations, the frustrated promises of schooling now threaten to widen the gap even further.

A DEPOLITICISED GENERATION?

The bitter experiences of youth are glaringly evident in many parts of the world. Chauvel (2006, 2010) questions the rupture of the generational pact in light of the “insider-ization” of the previous generation and the “outsider-ization” of the new generation. The failure to create jobs, especially those of a certain level and quality, the apparent fallacy of the educational promise and the additional strain brought on by immigration and its consequences with regard to socio-economic and cultural insertion, have engendered a breeding ground fraught with challenges. Youth now either mistrusts or is indifferent to politics. It has lost representation in the spheres of power, including the trade unions. Riots have broken out in big cities, recently even in Stockholm where like everywhere else, deregulation and “budgetary discipline” are taking their toll.

These desperate, violent demonstrations, carried out by poorly coordinated groups without any apparent political driving force, have been treated by the States and the public at large merely as matters for the police to handle. Could a revolutionary generation be in the making, or at least a large mass of youth that is heading towards anomic individualism and de-socialisation?

As mentioned above, Mannheim (2011) does not confuse generations with specific age groups. Instead he typifies generations as involving, among other things, shared horizons and a shared spirit of the times. Like social classes, they exist, but not in and of themselves. Certain generational units may constitute concrete groups such as the youth and student movements of the 60s. It would seem that unfavourable living conditions do not automatically lead to youth revolutions.

However, the onward progression of generations involves a loss of accumulated cultural assets (Weller, 2010). Accordingly, this implies that for youth there is interplay between the selective ability to remember and to

forget that is conditioned by a set of cultural filters that do not, however, enable one to foresee what will be discarded and what will not. Today's great gulf of separation makes intergenerational communication all the more difficult. This naturally impacts school life and communication between students and teachers, one of the most important cultural continuity bridges there is. Because these two groups have different generational orientations that include having grown up in different time periods and different ways of handling adversity, non-communication manifests itself not only in symbolic and physical forms of violence but in acts of rudeness and incivility.

These manifestations are taking place alongside a revolution in information technology. It is a revolution that is more deep-seated than the invention of the printing press and one that is perhaps more capable of mobilizing the power to forget than it is of sparking the power to remember. Predictions are difficult to make when we cannot anticipate what is likely to be forgotten.

There is a risk, however, that there will be a rupture in political socialisation and non-transmission of democracy from generation to generation (Chauvel, 2010). If young people discover that the political system they inherited from adults can only offer them a way down, they may very well turn their backs on it and/or seek to replace it. The similarity of today's predicament to the era of the Great Depression strongly suggests that we should not lightly dismiss the nefarious appeals of totalitarianism, authoritarianism and populism. Indeed a gathering mist seems to shroud the road ahead and our schools are not likely prepared to serve as the bridge to connect generations or even as an effective tool for repairing the damage that this new era is now inflicting.

IS EDUCATION A FARCE?

Education cannot remain indifferent to the scenario depicted above, because it is a major protagonist. Young people and society as a whole have been led to believe that education has noble missions, one of which is social stratification based at least partially on merit, which in turn contributes to social democratisation. If this premise is taken to be true, it then makes sense to spend more time in school, putting up with the tedium, enduring painful bouts of tests and examinations, and complying with the increasing number of laps that the powers that be keep adding to the race.



What is actually emerging, however, is a feeling that the promises have been false and that there is a lost generation – not lost for lack of schooling – but rather for an excess of it, because students' skills do not dovetail with the job market, and no occupational niches corresponding to the skills students have gained have been generated. Yet a considerable number of educators have been blind to these facts. In short, it has become easier to keep children and adolescents occupied with school to avoid their becoming occupied with other things.

A polemical book on this very issue emerged out of the flames of the 2008 crisis: *Le Déclassement* (Peugny, 2009). It addresses the question of social descent. Contrary to what the French Republic proclaims, social ascension is harder than ever for youngsters belonging to the poorer classes. And even for the offspring of the better-off, downward mobility seems increasingly probable. The prospect of a society based on merit has gradually disappeared while the ties linking social advancement and schooling have weakened and the social status of the parents is strengthened, insuring the position of the inheritors.

Other research works such as those of Dore (1976) and Collins (1979) had already discussed such latent frustrations. The idea of education for all to some extent embodies certain ideals of modernity stemming from the Enlightenment. At the time it was supposed that entering school and sticking it out would awaken the powers of reason, making human beings better people and, more pragmatically, providing the means to climb the social ladder. Social upward mobility is a declining stimulus for keeping children, adolescents and young people at school, in a context of cultural plurality and social background diversity. Under the often contradictory pressures of school demands and peer groups, this begs the question whether it is better to be a well-adjusted youth and a poorly adjusted student or the other way around.

As the promises of fulfilment gradually disappear into thin air, it becomes harder and harder for students living in consumer societies to stay in school. They experience mounting waves of irritation, boredom, non-conformity and difficulty in accepting rules that are often obsolete. As the gradual breakdown of the educational system marches on, schools increasingly resemble custodial institutions whose main function is to keep society's younger members under control. A portion of the students, however, manage to be sufficiently practical and resistant and soldier on, adopting the attitude that without sufficient schooling, things could be even worse for

them. There are at least two persuasive arguments that work in the school's favour:

- (1) As Collins (1979) pointed out in his treatise on credentialism, at the official level, schools have a total monopoly of the credentials that are most valuable for social insertion, that is, the diplomas and certificates they issue.
- (2) As the number of credential holders in a given society goes up, the value of the credentials goes down. This sparks an inflationary process that is further aggravated when job opportunities and the employment market fail to increase in the same proportion, or worse, spiral downward, as they have today.

Although these arguments are rational enough, they do not help to allay the frustration, social decline, concentration of income, poverty and feeling of uselessness that arise when the dominant cultures apply them to the development of identity. If the ship of education is already leaking badly, is there any way to make schools seaworthy in the future? Are new horizons opening up for a society without schools (Illich, 1971)?

With regard to this subject, the literature examines at least three fundamental contradictions underlying the school as we know it: an institution that has ostensibly been designed to put the ideals of modernity into practice (Touraine, 1992):

- (1) Although schools maintain the official monopoly on credentials, they have lost their monopoly of scientific and technical knowledge and have now become a competitor among a host of many others.
- (2) In many countries, the modernist ideal of making education accessible to all has been achieved. However, new populations entering the system have brought with them a variety of different social issues that were formerly only raised outside the school walls.
- (3) When education was a privilege, school was viewed as a selective, prestigious institution and those outside were anxious to enter. With the democratisation of education, schools have received populations that no longer find it as desirable as others did when it was elitist and that do not bring with them the socio-cultural legacy that marked the students of the past (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970). Thus, for many school-goers, the experience is synonymous with failure. As a result, some students defend their own



subjectivities, alienate themselves and rebel against the educational system, finding this experience to be more acceptable and less damaging than internalising failure.

If indeed *all* people are equal before the law and schooling is “a good thing” (Dubet, 2001) that is the fulfilment of a human right, then schools should cause everyone to achieve success. Yet, in reality, the price of failure, including educational inflation, is tantamount to social exclusion.

Most sociologists believe that the world has traversed a number of diverse frontiers that include post-modernity, late modernity, liquid modernity, network society and global risk society. Unfortunately, it seems that school systems are dealing with these diverse challenges and contradictions with the efficacy of a cracked, old vessel being made to hold new wine.

KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY OR ALIENATION?

Addressing the crisis that began in 2008 and focusing on the United States, Brown, Lauder and Ashton (2011) discuss the intense level of competition in global capitalism that has brought about lower costs, including labour costs, higher profits and, in many cases, lower prices. This has led to a feverish wave of public and private investment in education, research and innovation based on the premise that the higher people’s level of schooling is the more likely they are to obtain better the jobs and higher incomes. Disappointingly, however, large scale competition has actually led to the simplification of work-related tasks and cuts in both staff and salaries. Thus, only certain skills that are considered “strategic” reap lavish rewards for performance like those that guarantee high corporate profits, which include certain positions in the banking sector.

Thus when global capitalism launched its investment strategy targeting human skills and capital in an attempt to see who would yield more, it decided to do a classic 180. That is, it decided to see which of the more highly qualified workers would accept the lowest salary in return for giving their absolute best. The drive to see who will yield the highest quality for the lowest cost primarily victimises young people who are attempting to get into the labour market. This does not mean that the knowledge economy and society are baseless or that technology and innovation are not absolutely vital for

the new economic order but rather that global capitalism, in its bid to lower costs, is doing its best to make labour markets more “flexible”, which actually means more precarious. In the labour arena competitors range from unprecedentedly large groups of well-qualified individuals in the developed countries to slave or semi-slave labour in the less developed countries, such as the unfortunate individuals whose lives were snuffed out in the collapse of a building in Bangladesh that was more unsafe than the slave quarters in Brazil during its colonial era. Thus, a competition is in full swing that actually begins upon a person’s birth or even prior to it, that involves a quest to obtain a bit of the educational system’s inflated currency while it is still worth something as in the case of countries with greater cultural capital.

In contrast, the poor in both groups of countries continue to be as poor as ever, if not poorer. To some extent, it is not surprising. A careful reading of the Human Capital Theory makes it very clear that the law of supply and demand forms the essential backdrop. The expansion or contraction of job structures and the changes in job profiles were always implicit and conditioned schooling. As empirical data confirm, the relationship between education and income is not linear. Even so, countless moths have been drawn to the open flame of more and more education, as if it were the pass key to social democratisation and development. In ideological terms, a falsehood was being purveyed and practiced. However, it is obvious that there is a lot to be done on the supply side in terms of increasing and improving schooling and the qualifications of young people in many parts of the world (UNESCO, 2012).

Another thing that must not be underestimated is the gap separating schooling from work. Moreover, we must be cautious not to reduce the vastness of poverty and under-education around the world to a question of educational credentialism and inflation in the developed countries. What we must remain is aware that these phenomena have become more widespread with globalisation.

It is not by chance that Thurow (1996) had already referred to capitalism’s Pyrrhic victory: by becoming the world’s only victorious economic system it would, from then on, be required to respond to and meet the world’s most pressing needs and aspirations and find solutions especially for poverty. The same author, shortly before the September 11 attack, discussed “social volcanoes” that were about to erupt such as religious fundamentalism, ethnic separatism, and the contradictions between democracy and the market. Naturally, structural changes call for structural solutions but these



much-needed solutions still seem to be out of reach because of a lack, among other things, of clear, viable utopias.

As far as schooling is concerned, history has shown us that the trajectory of all monopolies is that of a falling star. Even the monopoly that formal education holds with regard to credentials could hardly be expected to ensure, during these unstable times, that everyone would remain in school and that every student would be successful regardless of the social pressure to succeed. As with other fields, the school as an institution seems to have attained a certain outreach threshold and, at the same time, a certain fragility threshold. Being in the firing line, as an institution that serves as both the stage and target for various forms of violence, schools have become pressure cookers. Yet many of the proposals for solving its problems have merely put forth recommendations for more school and more confinement to address the already existing violence. However, perhaps the strongest prop supporting school today, is that they function as a place to leave children and adolescents in a society where there are few such places and where changing family dynamics, working parents and other societal pressures have created a context in which fear prevails.

Yet the conclusions of research into what adolescents do out of school cannot be ignored. Apparently, they manage to set aside time to do their homework, sometimes even hiding the fact from their parents. They often join school-sponsored initiatives such as sports and other leisure-time activities on their own hook. Many take part mass culture activities, especially those that cater to their particular age group. They learn about and use technology to foster relationships and forge ties with peer groups and take part in other activities that Barrère (2011) has compared to the ritual testing of the ancient Greek *Paideia*, which was designed to mould the individual's character (toward a socially defined "good").

The author concludes that the pessimism of many educators and society itself is short-sighted since, in the activities that the adolescents participating in her research have selected for themselves, they have met the challenges with clarity and equilibrium. Her research subjects by and large have sought self-expressive emancipation, as they educate themselves in spheres that are free from the school's institutional discourse which, in our view, often purveys values that are more preached than actually practiced. The activities the young people selected also have socialisation effects and tend to converge to some extent under the umbrella of values taught by the school. It would be risky to over-

value such curricula but the results suggest that the monopoly held by schools today, when educational inflation is at its height, is far from being absolute.

It is worth remembering that at the beginning of the 20th century, Dewey and other progressive philosophers proposed that school-based education be closer to real life, given the radical changes that had taken place in urban-industrial society. At the time, the historical-social construct of youth and adolescence, with their emerging identities and prominent roles was in the early stages of being delineated and described, albeit in a somewhat hesitant, experimental fashion. Thanks to the historical-social circumstances, the child-centred progressives proved to be far less successful than the administrative progressives (Labaree, 2010).

Social constraints today are no less severe than in those formative years of educational philosophy. Hopefully now the urgency of the crisis will offer opportunities for us to listen more closely to the voices and input of the students, thus helping us gain a more accurate understanding of their aspirations – including their need for self-expression. Heightened awareness on our part could lead to more effective student engagement in school.

It is a given that without the will of the students, which stems from deep inside each one and is both a factor in and an effect of social dynamics, the educational/learning process cannot succeed. Coercion may induce students to enter school and carry on with their studies, but soon after its limitations will be laid bare.

An alternative may be broad-based replacement of or alternative curricula, enacted outside the school environment, as some curricula already do. Depending on the flexibility of the school these curricula may eventually deplete the schools of their students. Putting romantic visions aside, youth obliges us to look beyond our immediate horizons.

Education outside school walls may reveal the performance, potential and contradictions of the educational system, warts and all. But in the meantime, a world with an ageing population that is getting ready to enter into decline is barring the gates to the cohorts of youth that are attempting to enter. In the not-too-distant future, however, those in decline will be dependent on those very same youthful cohorts, since the trend has been toward increased longevity.

The wave that has broken on the shore is taking too long to draw back, while the succeeding waves are held in abeyance, creating a long, empty space between. When the sea holds back, it is usually the sign of an im-

minent Tsunami, so it would be wise to make way for the cohorts of youth before they open the way for themselves with the sheer force of the generational bulge. If it is any consolation to people of our age, at the very least, we will be able to witness and indeed participate in dramatic changes that promise to alter the course of history.

CONCLUSIONS: MODELLING THE FUTURE

In his famous research into how societies decide their own survivals or disappearance, Diamond (2006) analysed how erroneous group decisions were caused by the rapid forgetting of past experiences, misleading analogies with former situations, the aloofness of administrators, difficulties in perceiving slow change, egotism masked as rational behaviour, and the individualism of powerful groups and other processes. The principles Diamond applies to the Mayan cities, Easter Island, the state of Montana and Rwanda could very well be applied to the globalised world we now live in. If we narrow the focus to decision-makers in education, including classroom educators, then we can sum up some of the changes and implications as follows:

1. The age group accordion, which opens asymmetrically, alters the composition of groups of various ages that are in need of education. On the verge of a prospective inter-generational gulf, children, adolescents, young people, adults and old people are not what we have traditionally thought they were. Serres (2012) is right when he states that before teaching anything at all to anyone, it is essential to at least know who that 'anyone' is. However, we actually know as little about these newly classified and categorised children, adolescents and young people as we do about adults and the increasingly older elderly. This means that the educational sciences are faced with new challenges and that it behoves us to understand that we are acting in the present in accordance with a past that has already faded away.
2. In reality, capitalism has achieved a Pyrrhic victory. Exclusion has its limits and the reactions to centralised accumulation of wealth and globalised uniformity from time to time become explosive, both on the streets and in the media. As capitalism's legitimacy crisis deepens (Habermas, 1975), how long will cohesion be maintained through coercion? Will the solutions involve the democratic State? Utopias exist, but

are they sufficiently clear? The anti-capitalist rhetoric often found in educational discourse is often window-dressing. And it is worthwhile to ask to what extent the words are serving as a smokescreen to hide the lack of concrete changes that are actually within our educators' reach.

3. The promises of education have come to resemble deceptive propaganda as positive returns fall off in the face of costs, and students are increasingly less willing to accept school failure. Violence of, in and against schools is transforming them into hells on earth in which both educators and those being educated suffer. What structural changes need to be made to ensure that we do not keep on spinning the same old wheels? When will we move away from the details of course contents and how to manage texting in class and address the more relevant challenges affecting learners? When are curricula going to mirror to real life?
4. Across the board, exclusion has affected developed and undeveloped regions alike and young people call out for the right to a place in the sun, while society only offers them a social moratorium. While we remain in this holding pattern, the highways and bridges of education are being deconstructed and the concept of education itself progressively loses much of its legitimacy. Faced with a future that we have taken too long to perceive, how can educators maintain Ariadne's thread, which is essential to ensuring continuity between civilization's present and past?
5. The school as an institution is like a granite castle: symmetrical, enclosed, reinforced and shielded by bureaucratic rules for almost every situation. These features make it very difficult for schools to respond to societal turbulence, which has become globalised, heterogeneous, fluid and flexible. This upheaval has led to an ongoing process involving the most radical opening up of access to knowledge and the most intense development of subjectivity of the last few centuries. Education today not only has to deal with the intergenerational gulf but also with the difficulties generated by inter-civilizational dialogue. An intra-civilizational breach has opened up in Western society; on one side of the gap is technical knowledge and on the other, values, feelings, beliefs, ethics and morals. It is a situation that makes social and school unrest inevitable.
6. School education in its present form resembles that castle surrounded by bureaucratic moats and rigid temporal and spatial boundaries. Education is centred on important but transient knowledge which, in many cases, is quickly becoming obsolete. Its pace is slow and often tedious.



It is based on the unilateral nature of a relationship in which there are some who “know” and who are charged with teaching those who “don’t know”. As an institution that supposedly embodies the ideal of modernity (Touraine, 1992), the school emphasises reason and minimises emotion, which is so closely linked to the ability to learn. It concerns itself mainly with the strictly cognitive aspects of knowledge and far less with values, attitudes and feelings. Although it is aloof from the times and societies of today, it is actually a product of historical reconstruction. Despite being out of synch with the times, transformation will not come about without great effort, which of course includes the efforts of educators themselves, who wish to see formal educational systems survive.

7. Conditions, which are in constant flux, appear to call for a less structured, more informal kind of education, one that is flexible enough to detect and deal with different age and cultural groups. It should be a system of education that is untrammelled by time and spatial constraints and wide open to inter and trans-disciplinary methods of dealing with issues. It should include groups that meld face to face socialization with modern forms of distance socialisation. The solutions found would hopefully consign compartmentalised, academic specialisation to the dustbin of history and revolutionize the rigid model of teacher – class – subject. The educational system might even become less bureaucratic owing to the lesser importance conferred on credentials.
8. Revealing the need for change is the easy part. What is hard is to take the historical steps to transform an institution that has become crystallised into one that is truly dynamic. It is easy to say that we not only must predict, act, and reform but revolutionise. But it is much harder to know how to act strategically, especially in light of the resistance that prevails not only within the institution itself, but primarily outside it: within society at large. At first glance the task appears urgent and Herculean but success will depend largely on the ability of young people to act in an articulated manner as a generation. If they manage to do so the new wine may actually remain within and gain character from the old vessel it is poured into. Will the process be gradual or quick and tumultuous? The tendency of those in power is to give up the ring so as not to lose the finger but that only happens when there is an historic deadlock. Should we come to a deadlock, which portions of the judicial-political heritage will our youth remember and which parts will they forget?

9. In spite of all the risk and anxiety, there are some glimmers of hope. Young people have heeded the call for indignation made by an old intellectual, Stéphane Hessel, who survived the Nazi death camps and today is one of the world's outstanding examples of physical and intellectual longevity. Throughout the course of his life, he has renewed his ideas and taken it upon himself to sound a warning to today's young people: that the worst attitude is that of indifference. Reliving the reasons he joined the Resistance in the first place, and spotting new enemies in the field, Hessel (2013) posed a fundamental question. Why, today are the resources lacking to maintain and prolong the existence of those human rights and freedoms that were so hard-won in the post-war period when Europe was in ruins?

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**CHANGING PRINCIPLES AND GOALS OF UNIVERSITIES:
QUESTIONING TRAJECTORIES**

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ABSTRACT

The argument of the article is that in a period of about thirty years the social purpose, the epistemic and pedagogic practices, and the political position of the English university have all changed; but that the patterns of assumption and practices about societies and universities which have begun to stabilise in England are not extraordinary and extreme. The implicit theme ('implicit', because there is no space to pursue the full comparative argument) is that we are now at some time-distance from 1980 and, even if England was in that period interpreted as an 'extreme case' its patterns can be seen currently as an early case of several 'routine' social processes that were about to happen in a range of societies and university systems. The article sketches the patterns of the political pressures which have influenced why the English university system has changed in the ways it has. Some of these pressures are easily visible in changing discourses, notably the political proposition that 'there is no alternative' to seeing the global (and wealth) as defined by a shift from the dominance of industrial economies to the emerging dominance of knowledge economies. The effects on education were fairly obvious, not least in the external surveillance of the university by agencies which measure 'quality' of teaching and research. It is argued that the core of the change included a shift between two major ideologies: from notions of a large and welfare State to a small and evaluative State; and from an educational ideology which stressed equality for educational opportunity as a social good, to another ideology which stressed effective and efficient educational systems for economic purposes. The article concludes with some brief reflections on the seriousness, societal and pedagogic, of these changes which – if the gloomy thoughts are accurate – have implications for a range of societies and for the young of those societies.

KEY WORDS

Economic and social crisis; The English university; Thatcher; Ideologies of educational effectiveness and educational efficiency; Changing universities.



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Changing Principles and Goals of Universities: Questioning Trajectories

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INTRODUCTION

‘Changing principles and goals of universities’ is, of course, a pun in English. The title includes both description (they are changing, they have been changing) and the implicit intention to change – change as purpose, ‘changing’ as a participle which indicates deliberate action. Similarly ‘questioning trajectories’ means that the direction in which higher education systems or university systems are moving can be questioned from outside; but also that universities themselves might be asking questions about old ways of disciplinary thought, developing new ways of thinking about teaching and new styles of leadership; and thus new visions of what it is to ‘educate’ the young.

Both of these – the changes and the trajectories – can be good or bad. Currently there is a great deal of writing which indicates that things are bad – but that there are good solutions to put right what is wrong.

These ‘solutions’ – all offered with enthusiasm – include: a return to the liberal arts; a need for universities to ally tightly with governments and business in a triple helix aimed at creative innovation; a necessity to shift to ‘robust and relevant’ research which will assist policy decision-making; and a clear necessity to move up some international scale which measures ‘the quality’ of universities so that the university and by extension the nation

can survive in a world of knowledge economies. Some of these solutions need better management; others need high fees for students; or new private-sector universities; or 'more' (universities, that is). Or universities can help in (Third World) 'development'. There has been a recent emphasis on the need for 'world class' universities and 'international research cooperation' and 'internationally mobile academics' and 'internationalisation' or 'Europeanization'. All of these motifs are visible in the literature (Altbach & Balan, 2007; Epstein et al., 2008; Hoecht, 2006; Marginson, 2007a, 2007b; Naidoo, 2008; Peters & Besley, 2007; Rizvi, 2009; Salmi, 2009).

In other words, there is a scatter of solutions, all offered with some confidence. At the same time, ideologies exist or have been developed, which indicate why certain patterns of solution – strategic policies – are the only correct ones; whether these are a return to the old and true purposes of university education (the liberal arts) or the new and true purposes of the university which is – apparently – to function as a business within international economic relations. Increasingly in England for example, the message is clear: universities will be construed, and measured and rewarded as-if they were economic institutions (Besley, 2009; Besley & Peters, 2009).

Why is there such shrill confidence about particular solutions – and what is happening to young people while all this is going? Indeed, amid this confidence that there is a crisis and the solutions are known (of course there are several versions of 'the crisis' and a plethora of 'solutions') what is going on – sociologically and politically?

TRAJECTORIES OF APPROACH

There are several ways into the analysis. Let me mention three, initially. All, in different ways, catch the imagination and the theme of youth.

The first is a brief sketch of my own educational history. As a young person, I attended a 'grammar school', a state-funded academic school located at the secondary level of UK education. From such schools, I, and all my young family relatives and all of my classmates could sensibly aspire to go to university. The school that I attended took about 20% of the age cohort and the university sector at that time in the UK took about 5% of the age cohort. There was a generous system of university scholarships for young people who achieved the qualification (basically, 3 'Advanced Level' passes in academic

examinations taken at about the age of 17 or 18) necessary for university entry. After being accepted as a student in the London School of Economics and Political Science, I was taught intensively in personal tutorials and small seminars for undergraduates (this is, people studying for bachelor degrees); very intimate small undergraduate seminars – to the point where I received a stern written reproof from a senior academic for missing three of his seminars on Wednesday afternoons in my final year of undergraduate study! (I confessed, partially¹; and returned to my academic responsibilities.)

Now when I look at large classes in a range of English universities I realise that I am looking at something like 40% of the age cohort – and the students or their families are in large measure paying their own fees. I also recognise that in my own institution (the Institute of Education of the University of London) which is the largest specialist institution for the study of education in the UK, a doctoral candidate has a right – stated in internal documents and advised in national ones – to a tutorial for one hour every two weeks. Only that: one hour every two weeks. And there is no guarantee that a particular department will run a weekly doctoral seminar. Things changed. What changed, sociologically?

The second way into the theme is to recall a couple of good analyses around the time of the Robbins Report (1963) a report on higher education in the UK.

One analysis was by R. H. Turner (1961). He drew a distinction between ‘sponsored’ and ‘contest’ mobility. ‘Sponsored mobility’ has several sociological characteristics and details (which define the precise ways in which systems characterised by sponsored mobility controls ambition) but its core characteristic is its early selection of a potential elite and their careful socialisation and academic training. Turner illustrated this concept from the UK; with admission to university being one definition of success though not necessarily the point of ‘sponsored mobility’. (In principle, ‘sponsored mobility’ as a concept can be used retrospectively and analytically for comparisons; for example to assess styles of selection in schools and universities and cramming institutes that led towards the choice, and shaping, of future imperial administrators for India). In contrast – and Turner illus-

¹ I had been going to the ballet performances in the afternoons at Covent Garden. This I confessed in writing. I refrained from mentioning that watching Nureyev and Fonteyn dance was more inspiring for my own sense of how I should be trying to write than reading and discussing the ponderous academic writing which that particular ‘senior academic’ produced in what, in my view as I had to read the books, was excessive quantity.



trated this theme from the USA – ‘contest mobility’ keeps students in the ‘race’ for as long as possible, by deferring final points of selection; at least metaphorically giving all a chance, for longer, to succeed (with admission to university being one definition of success, though not necessarily the point of ‘contest mobility’). Again the theme is extendable to the selection of US political elites, a principle modified from time to time by the emergence of powerful political oligarchies (such as the Kennedy and Bush families). A second good paper of the epoch was by Martin Trow (1970) which defined (elite and) mass and universal higher education systems. Trow pointed out that ‘elite systems’ which took a small percentage of the age cohort were changing into ‘mass’ higher education systems and a few of those (USA, Japan) were becoming ‘universal systems’. This comparative line of analysis is well illustrated in *From Elite to Mass to Universal Higher Education* by McConnell, Berdahl and Fay (1973).

Thus, not least by using the perspectives of these analyses, it was looking as if by the mid-1970s the basic patterns of educational systems in the industrialised world were becoming clear. Elite systems changed into mass systems (at school and university levels) and were understandable in terms of their age-cohort percentages in educational institutions, their styles of controlling ambition, and their mode of relation to selection for work and political elite selection. Yes, of course there were differences for Sweden and Denmark, and Italy and Greece, and Argentina and Brazil, and the ‘communist’ systems had some interesting mixtures of contest and sponsored mobility – but clearly a great deal of progress had been made in analysis...

Retrospectively, that is clearly not the case, and there is a third *aperçu* available to help grasp what needs description. In the autumn of 2013, my own Institution will run a major set of lectures on ‘Celebrating Robbins’ which will be addressed by several professors, including two Knights of the Realm who are also Professors. The aspiration and acknowledgment is perfectly correct: the Robbins Report (1963) was a major national Report which stressed the necessity to expand the UK university system to meet “social demand”. This was defined as providing, within higher education, places for all qualified candidates (because they were qualified and they were candidates). The policy argument was about social opportunity in a democracy and not – although Lord Robbins himself was an economist working at LSE – a perspective drawn primarily from economics and economic growth. So a celebratory note is perfectly justified.

However, there is an alternative question which can be asked – how on earth did we (the UK) get ‘here’ from ‘there’? How, sociologically as well as politically, do you finish up with your university system in its contemporary configuration if ‘The Robbins Report’ (1963) is your starting point? Is that a definition – in the absurd English managerialist phrase – of what ‘going forward’ means?

Not in ways that might have been hoped for, perhaps. The basic answer to the question is that ‘The Rules’ changed – in other words, there was a seismic shift in political assumption and a basic shift in thinking about what education was for and how it should work. In a sonorous phrase – but one that is very difficult to operationalise – ‘the grammar of education’ changed.

The consequences for ‘education’ and the young were and are dramatic. So how did we ‘go forward’ and what did we find when we got there/here?

“GOING FORWARD”

In England between 1870 and 1944, more or less, there was created a mass educational system and between those dates, there was a shift in power from control by the church to control by the state.

- there was also in this period, a shift in emphasis from providing elementary education after 1870 to providing mass secondary education in and from 1944 onwards. Thus we can see a state project devoted to the creation of mass education, increasingly – as time goes – emphasising secondary education and the theme of equality.
- these broad tendencies also were quite widespread and affected, at different times and speeds, Prussia, France, the United States and, very dramatically, Japan.

We have grown accustomed, following the work of educational historians, to think of these movements as part of a *political* project of (nation) state formation. As a consequence we tend to overlook other ways to think about the topic – such as the fact the schools themselves were constructed in an industrial metaphor and for industrial societies. By stressing ‘state formation’ we overlook the actual style of the educational systems themselves, which were not ‘democratic’ in the sense that Dewey subsequently developed. These were educational systems were also part of an adaptation to the economic formation termed ‘industrialization’.



If we are to understand the trajectory of changes in English education we need first to note the nineteenth century model of the (state) school as locally controlled; routinely organized under a good teacher – a Head Teacher; with Her Majesty’s Inspectors checking quality; and after 1944 with examinations (for secondary school destination) at the age of 11, a school leaving age which gradually moved up to about 15 years of age, and some tough examinations for university entry. As indicated this model was shaped within a growing ideology of equality of educational opportunity (after 1870 onwards) that became sharply defined by 1944 and the embracement of mass secondary schooling.

Around the late 1970s, this model of an educational system moves into crisis (and ‘youth’ started to be redefined).

THE ‘ECONOMIC’ CRISIS

The political crisis of the late 1970s looked to be an economic crisis. By 1979, national politics were dominated by very visible themes of class war – notably disputes between the industrial trades unions and the government; and old models of an economic system with ‘the commanding heights of the economy’ organised as ‘nationalised’ industries: industries such coal, iron and steel, the railways, airlines, water boards, electrical generation, and so on. Strikes in major large-scale industries, several of them (such as the car industry) in severe decline and in need of State help, and the inability of the Labour Government in the late 1970s to resolve such conflicts and to re-start economic growth, led in 1979 to the election of the first of Mrs Thatcher’s Conservative administrations. Thus, it is quite sensible to suggest that the electorate brought Mrs Thatcher to power to solve a very severe economic crisis (and she did). However, with hindsight it is also possible to suggest, analytically, that what was being put into place was far more than some solutions to an economic crisis².

The struggle was to redefine the spectrum of politics; and the nature of

2 In Britain, after 1945 both main political parties embarked on a ‘modernity project’ which finally spilt around views of the State. From 1979 the intensity and scale of change in political philosophy, in the role of the State, in the central value system, in efforts to reshape the economy, and in the shift of the political spectrum to the Right reversed the earlier effort in 1945 to create a ‘Big State’ – a welfare state with nationalised industries and a great deal of economic planning.

the State; and a 'reading of the global'. There was a move, politically, to the Right. This included the rescue of nineteenth century themes of competition and reward and punishment. It was also a move to the Right in the sense that tradition of politics of Conservatism to build 'One Nation' which had run from Disraeli to Macmillan was broken by Mrs Thatcher, the radical. There was also a move away from a 'welfare state' model of how to govern towards (in the vocabulary of Phillip Bobbitt) a 'market state'.

The 'reading of the global' also changed. I use the expression 'reading of the global' normally to identify what different generations of comparative educationists 'see' when they look overseas: Nazi or Italian fascism; Soviet Revolution; 'colonies', or later the Cold War and 'development' or maybe post-coloniality.

Outside of comparative education, in this moment around 1980, English Conservative Party politicians were 'seeing' the problems of international economic competition in the European market, competition from the 'Asian Tigers', and the long and steady economic decline in Britain's economic position among nations (Sanderson, 1972, 1999). The solutions are now well-known: action needed to be taken because the State was too big and public spending too large. Oligarchies were to be broken up: the miners' union, the steel industry, the railways, the law, medicine and the National Health Service and the education service itself (because schools and universities were judged to be professionally dominated bureaucracies).

The State would establish the rules of competition (Neave, 1988, 2009), and it moved to a new discourse about choice, fairness, transparency, effective and efficient schools – a discourse which also framed the policies of New Labour under Mr Blair whose election slogan 'education, education, education' left obscure exactly that which needed to be made explicit: in what ways did Labour versions of 'education' vary from the Conservative versions of education at that time?

In fact what was happening in education was clear and was clear quite early. There was a shift in its 'grammar' – the discursive assumptions about of the purpose of education, the definition of what it was to be well educated, and the principles of practice (the ways in which educational institutions were to 'deliver the well-educated', and how they were to think about what counted as good teaching and learning...).



THE 'EDUCATIONAL CRISIS'

Within English³ education there was a shift from equality of educational opportunity, to effectiveness and efficiency as the new meta-principle of education. The practical operating core principle was the concept of 'the market'. Schools were graded and national 'league tables' of relative performance began to be published; like football teams – but of course useful if 'parents' become 'consumers' of schools. To make 'the (educational) market' work, there were huge structural shifts: a National Curriculum was created; there was to be National Testing of children at 7, 11 and 14 and 'Local Management of Schools' was invented, where finance and management were delegated to school level so that each school could compete and adjust to the market. The practical consequences were immediate. Head Teachers became managers. Local Authority power, especially over the finance of education, was limited and "opting out" became possible – 'opting out' of local control; that is, schools could choose to be directly financed and controlled from London. Her Majesty's Inspectors were largely replaced by a new quango, the Office for Standards in Education which carried out inspections and graded schools on detailed and explicit criteria, by visiting them with teams of assessors. Teacher training passed into the hands of what was (then) a new Teacher Training Agency, which was influenced by the Government rather than university traditions. Teacher training is now strongly linked to schools and the practice of teaching. There has been an expansion of private education and the growth of several new kinds of schools notably 'academies' and 'free schools' which appeal either to the possibility that children will be better trained for specific jobs or will be in schools much more dominated by parents than before.

Universities were also forced into the market place: formerly as much as 95% of university money came from the public purse. Now universities compete strongly for a range of funded research income and consultancies and for the fees of overseas students⁴. National measurement of the performance

3 The Scots have their own educational traditions and a different class base and a different sense of what it is to be 'a nation'. And they have their own poets who emphasise a very human form of democracy. At the level of policy as well, the Scots have been less enthusiastic than the English about rushing down the historic path loosely called neo-liberalism.

4 In principle, recruitment of overseas students can be unlimited and their fees can be retained by each university as 'profit'. The fees of home students – though fee levels can be set by individual universities – are not such a simple matter of cash accountancy and retention of 'profit'. Home student numbers are subject to complex controls. Currently English students have to pay tuition fees in Scotland; Scottish students do not.

of individual academics and departments was also introduced – and tenure was abolished. The reasons were clear.

There had been recognition by politicians, their advisers and by pressure groups, of the importance of analyses (not least by OECD and the World Bank) which were specifying a changed world economy (Cowen, 1996). Though not in that vocabulary, the crisis of late modernity had been recognised. The economic reading of the world emphasised the European market, as well as an international market which included Asia and the Pacific Rim.

The economic results in a twenty-year period included the destruction of the nineteenth century industries in the North, where towns became archaeological industrial museums, and there was a massive growth in service industries. There were new millionaires, a strong pound, and new records established in the value of shares on the Stock Exchange and greatly increased economic inequality. By the time of the new alliance between the Labour Party and business, in the late 1990s, there was both major outward investment (into the USA) as well as major inward investment by the European Union, Japan and South Korea into the regions of Britain. By the late 1990s it was northern Europe, rather than Britain, which was looking at labour discipline, which was having currency problems, and which was in a low economic growth period. The ‘crisis of late modernity’ had it seemed been negotiated. But what is the nature of that crisis and what challenge, including its educational challenge, does it pose to Britain and other countries?

SO WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The problem is that the world changed and universities – the proper role of universities – was, relatively rapidly, redefined in a mono-optical way, which stresses economic problems rather than the political and the social.

Late modernity is a moving target and it is clear that its sociology and economics is far from crisply understood either theoretically or at the level of policy. Few predicted the widespread collapse of ‘The Banks’ and the extraordinary form of economics called ‘quantitative easing’⁵.

⁵ In the old days, ‘quantitative easing’ was not offered as an example of good economic practice. ‘Quantitative easing’ (a very non-traditional and undisciplined way of central banks inserting money into the



Certainly, in the economic system, the simplest characteristics of late modernity can be perceived as globally mobile capital, mobile sites of production and highly (and internationally) mobile labour. In this sense, for example, Taiwan can locate its industry in South China. We have also seen the insertion of the former “Eastern bloc” into the capitalist world economy – with Cuba following slowly. We have seen the emergence of major regional economic blocs, for example, the European Union, the North American Free Trade Association and MERCOSUR; and some of the difficulties of sustaining such blocs, e.g. the current economic difficulties of Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece. Emphasising the implications for both economic and political power, at the world level, of the very large economies (BRICs) of Brazil and Russia and India and China is also fashionable (though clearly Brazil’s current boom has some similarities to that of Portugal earlier and India has a very strange mix of agriculture, manufacturing and service industries). However – if we ignore such gloomy anxieties – the current academic and political consensus that we live in a time of “knowledge economies”, characterised by research and development and major economic rewards from innovations in renewable energies, biotechnology, complex information languages.

What is less clear is the political dimensions of late modernity. Above all, there is little discussion of the emerging sociology of a knowledge society (as compared with a ‘knowledge economy’). At the same time, older political formulations have come under strain with new emphases on minority identities within ‘nation states’ such as Spain, the UK and France where claims to special identity are being stressed by the Catalans, the Scots, and the Bretons. More subtle changes are occurring in the permeability of borders which are more and more penetrated by major diasporas, such as the Turks in Germany, the Africans in Italy, the Maghrebians in France and Asians into Britain and Canada. If the trend continues, we will be seeing smaller and smaller political units within larger and larger economic blocs.

Thus some political and social challenges for education can be sketched:

- Are we seeing – amid large new regional units – a cultural retreat into nationalisms? Ideas of the economic market do not deal with this prob-

economy via commercial banks, pension funds and so on) used to be called in a simpler older form) ‘printing money’. The consequences of that, which included the runaway inflation that tended to accompany the practice – as in the Weimar Republic – were offered to us as students at LSE as ‘a lesson learned’.



lem. Thus the State is confronted with a problem of cohesion, not least because, under the pressures of 'the market', the existence of an underclass and minority identities is ignored.

- Are we seeing, in England and in Europe, the collapse of the Enlightenment Project and faith in science and reason? Are we seeing the growth of insistent positional knowledges – those of feminist, gay, ethnic and religious minorities? Are we seeing the 'collapse of canon' – an agreed corpus of European literature, high cultivation, and a sense of history? The Durkheimian problem of social solidarity remains a classical challenge to States and education systems.
- However, are we also seeing the State-driven nineteenth century university education systems of Europe (dedicated to the creation of nations and later social goals of equality of educational opportunity) finally breaking up? The university itself, so long protected by various theories as a special place with academic institutional autonomy and 'academic freedom' for individuals, is changing (Rothblatt, 1997).
- Universities are being increasingly absorbed into national and international Research and Development industries. And as the university attenuates, so do the cultural forms of the high status parts of education systems, the universities.
- What we are seeing is the closer and closer management of university systems – new rules of performativity are being created and probably they will lead to tighter and tighter links between universities and (capitalist) economic systems. In England (and in Australia and New Zealand), university systems are now, in their cultures, increasingly like business systems, reflecting after two or three decades of reform the capitalistic late modern economic systems in which they are embedded.
- What we are also seeing is a shift in educational discourse. The new vocabulary includes 'assessment and efficiency', students as 'consumers', measurement of 'value-added product'. The vocabulary of 'management' and 'market niche' has become audible. The crucial words include the 'performance' of the educational system. We speak of the market-driven university systems of Australia, England and New Zealand. They provide flexibilities in training a skilled labour force in a new economic world characterised by mobile production sites, niche marketing, mobile capital, and mobile labour. As Mrs Thatcher pointed out 'there is no alternative'... which is a very powerful ideological position.



- We are seeing the growth of an admiration for management, and management by objectives, and the handling of ‘risk’ (Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007). The proposition that educational excellence will follow from good management – both external to the university by national systems of quality control and inside the university by skilled management teams which can define good teaching, good research and the good academic – is a frightening proposition.

To reach this point, the English State has managed a number of remarkable shifts:

- A major expansion of the numbers in the university system.
- A shift of university finance from state support to a ‘mixed economy’ of some state support and other monies earned in the market place (of consultancies, research-contract work and student fees).
- A new domination over educational discourse, around the theme of economic globalisation and the redefinition of students as consumers, academics as producers and research as something which has ‘impact’.
- It has redefined what universities will transmit – skills (rather than knowledge) and it has.
- Established surveillance in the name of effectiveness and efficiency rather than offering direct and full support for universities which was its traditional role, at the same time.
- Asking that universities now become market-like in their self definition: they are in domestic and international university-markets, and are increasingly being expected to behave as if they were profit-making institutions within national and international assumptions about new modes of governance (King, 2009).

CONCLUSION

Overall, then I am arguing that – in England – we have seen a shift in the cultural form of education systems and university systems, a shift into a market metaphor; and possibly onward to a cobweb model of a networked learning-diffusion mode as new technologies for instruction take shape.

We are also seeing the English State gradually withdrawing from the provision of public services – including university education – and concentrat-



ing upon establishing the rules for its delivery by others. We are seeing the gradual withdrawal of the state from its historic mission of the provision of equality of educational opportunity and a new emphasis on the control of educational content and the transmission of learning.

We have moved from the nineteenth century model of using university education as part of state formation. We are now using universities as part of the formation of economic power. In the late nineteenth and for much of the twentieth century, the English state provided education (and later, universities) in the name of social justice, which is a civic idea. Our ideas and our metaphors are now economic.

One possibility is a social crisis as the divisive power of socio-economic stratification in the new knowledge economy compounds the existing social fractures of English society – regional, class and ethnic – because of the ‘success’ of neo-conservative reforms in education, a trajectory which has not so far significantly altered regardless of which of the two or three main political parties (Conservative, Labour, and Liberal) have held power.

One possibility is that we have abolished ‘youth’. Youth is now a student, who is a customer, in the market for ‘skills’ which will lead to employment in a knowledge economy – except that it does not. This is a promise between generations, and contemporary political leaders in a number of countries have managed to alter university systems – without being able to offer young people employment. This is not a breakdown in the ‘social contract’; but it is a sad violation of the promises made for the last twenty years about the necessity for and the advantages to be gained from university reform.

Of course, I understand the counter-argument: that the new style of university reform did not go far enough, fast enough...

And of course I understand that notions of the public good and the university-as-a-public good are intensely political and it is difficult to step back far enough to see why and how these visions and social processes involve the *translation* of the public good into the internal culture and interior structures of university as a public good. What is clear and startling is that these social processes are penetrative, right down to pedagogic relations and what counts as good research and a good professor and who decides that.

They always were (Bernstein, 2000).



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**CITIZENSHIP AND YOUTH SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT IN CANADA:
LEARNING CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES**

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ABSTRACT

With the general increase in the 'production' of citizenship and global citizenship education scholarship, one might think that we have established a clear and comprehensive understanding of these concepts and their daily implications and possibilities. That may not be the case, and while all claims, contexts and formations of citizenship are important and certainly empower individuals and groups in important ways that directly affect their lives, they do not necessarily explain or actively respond to the qualities of citizenship that people experience, desire or are able to achieve. Our analysis of youth engagement holds that by strengthening the quality of local citizenship, the connections to global citizenship are also affirmed. To discuss and analyse these active youth engagement projects in Canada's public (and to some extent private) spheres, we look into the socio-political formations of three contemporary Canadian youth movements. The first is Lead Now; the second is the Journey of the Nishiyuu and Idle No More and their members; and the third is the student movement that was organized by youth for the adequate funding of higher education in the province of Quebec.

KEY WORDS

Canada; Youth; Citizenship.



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Citizenship and Youth Social Engagement in Canada: Learning Challenges and Possibilities

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INTRODUCTION

With the recent proliferation of scholarship on citizenship and global citizenship education, one would assume that we have a clear and comprehensive understanding of the concepts and their practical implications and possibilities. As happens with any disciplinary endeavour, the assumption is usually that the more we focus on an area, the more we comprehend its conceptual and theoretical constructions and practical outcomes. While that may be a general epistemic desire, something as complicated as citizenship formations and practices require much more than probing certain zeitgeists or other time-linked examinations of a given field. Since the issue of citizenship is so complex, multi-locational and involves so many agents, it might theoretically seem to be an analytically superfluous idea that is continuously elastic in its formations, deformations and relational features. How then should we interpret emerging issues and the responses needed and enacted by people in such a myriad of socio-political, economic, and environmental locations? How do youth factor into this complex picture – youth, who are ready to take their place in the societal relationships and make sense of their citizenship?

Citizenship rights are often predicated on tenuous geographical attachments that never answer the question: to what extent can people determine

the real nature of their citizenship, and even more importantly, how do they subjectively perceive and act on their rights? When we address citizenship's general categories, we always associate them with identity, belonging, rights and claims. Indeed, employing these four terms one could portray the various contexts and relationships involved in citizenship fairly thoroughly. In addition, these terms can also convey a number of relational concerns that require much more input in order for us to draw conclusions.

Despite this complexity, we still tend to categorise citizenship rights, claims and acquisitions on the basis of three categories. As Isin (2009), among others, notes, contemporary contexts of citizenship usually derive from familial attachments (*jus sanguinis*), the so-called blood relations claims; from geographical birth connections, the land in which one is born (*jus soli*); or migration-triggered, durable location of residence that leads to naturalization (*jus domicili*). With decades of intense globalization, and particularly with neoliberalism as its conduit, these categories seem insufficient; therefore, in this paper, we pose new questions regarding location and relations of citizenship.

CITIZENSHIP: LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL CONSIDERATIONS

Generally speaking, all claims, contexts and formations of citizenship are important and empower individuals and groups in ways that directly affect their lives. But they do not explain or analyse the quality of citizenship that people experience, desire or are able to achieve. Indeed, the way we talk about citizenship today is overwhelmingly in terms of geography and practices, so that, more often than not, one is led to equate place/country with citizenship. While legally and in terms of rules and regulations this is still important, it is now time to question the full meaning and endowments of citizenship, which, in our estimation, should focus less on spatial realities and more on how or whether people live in such spaces as engaged claimants of their social, political, economic and educational rights and responsibilities.

With the complex and multi-locational realities of globalization, we also need to view such rights and responsibilities as globally driven, established, and operationalized. Thus, we cannot talk about local citizenship without discussing, and practicing, the global. Rethinking of relations of the local and global in contemporary arrangements that affect citizenship realities doesn't necessarily mean that one cancels out the other. As Abdi and Nas-

em (2008) previously discussed, while global citizenship power relations are certainly skewed in favour of the West and its international institutions, the force of the local is still active, and will have an influence on the trajectories of those relationships. We can see this in social movements that are connected globally / internationally but still actively engage in local sites of struggle. It shows that the global and the local should not be seen as dichotomous locations of issues or citizen responses.

In our analysis of youth engagement, our understanding is that by strengthening the quality of local citizenship, the connections to global citizenship are also affirmed (Abdi & Shultz, 2008; Shultz, 2011). The way we define youth, while inclusive of age categories, is more expansive. While in general terms “youth” is invariably taken to mean people between the ages of 17 and 30, our objective is to go beyond 30, assuming that there are those whose maturity into full adulthood was truncated by problematic, successive economic cycles and that these individuals are still dealing with financial and – by extension – citizenship issues that may formerly have been specific to much younger groups identified as youth. While not totally disavowing age boundaries, we are deliberately defining youth categories as fluid, circumstantial and life-experience related. Perhaps more importantly, with our focus on youth groups and not necessarily on individual youth, our categorizing becomes more social and subsumes those who are closely linked to and take part in youth activities and youth rights campaigns.

Thus, youth becomes an issue of perspective. Those who hold views or positions within social institutions and regulatory processes, who are asking for inclusive changes and hold a long-range view (and therefore, a future-oriented perspective) of the unfolding of society, may well be categorized as youth. In addition, there have been times in Canada and elsewhere when youth pressure groups have focused on issues that are not confined to youth, but straddle the interests of others, including the elderly.

As such, in discussions of citizenship especially those involving young people, the classification of “youth” may also become politically and civically positioned and operationalized. This trans-temporal, trans-interest, trans-generational and certainly trans-geographical work of activist youth can therefore be informed by and contribute to both local and global contexts of citizenship. As such, their citizenship work is both theoretically and practically linked to what Nigel Dower (2002) called the “global ethic,” that is, when one conducts one’s own life perceiving and acting in accordance with the needs of others. It



includes those who speak and advocate for inclusive and selectively liberating global citizenship in a wide variety of contexts and relationships.

With fluid concepts of global citizenship and youth, the problematic assumption may arise that those in so-called developed countries such as Canada enjoy complete citizenship with regard to their personhood and their educational, political and economic locations. This assumption is discredited by two realities. First, no citizenship context is complete, and any claim that it is masks myriad citizenship violations that are certainly taking place.

Second, even the Canadians, who are categorized as first world citizens, face many citizenship issues that are not uncommon to many developing countries. These include the problematic, exclusionist rules established by the elite; the professionalization of the political sphere; the dismantling of what Habermas and others call the “public sphere” (Habermas, 1984, 1996); and widespread public apathy towards the political process. The issue of political participation is especially complicated in an allegedly highly-developed Canada, where the level of participation is so low that more often than not, many people question the viability of the country’s democracy, since only about 40 percent of citizens vote in election cycles that, in theory, are the foundation of Canada’s systems of representative democracy and citizenship.

In addition, the neoliberal, capitalist version of citizenship that is currently so dominant throughout the world tends to blur the ideological lines of liberal democracy, which, despite its presumptive political openness, is actually based on the ideologies of classical laissez faire economics with its ‘survival of the fittest’ belief system that tends to aggravate class divisions, thus assuring the socio-economic marginalization of large segments of society. Indeed, if this marginalization happened in specific countries previously, with globalization the trend has spread throughout the world where the global plutocracy has been enriching itself at the expense of what is now termed the “global precariat” (Abdi, 2009).

So engrained are these divisions now that, in our opinion, they invalidate any notion that a global ethic – which should have induced us to live and let live – is emerging. This reality, as Wedel (2009) notes, is a demonstration of the enduring economic and political rule of the global elites, who apparently are not willing to spread citizenship rights to all.

Within these contexts of socio-economic and political marginalization, which affect different segments of society in different ways, we believe that

one of the groups that is most affected when it comes to multiple rights platforms is that of young people. For example, youth have consistently faced higher levels of unemployment, a phenomenon that is very common in all developed countries (International Labour Organization, hereafter ILO, 2013), and even more common in the developing world (Abdi, 2009). Youth are also forced to grapple with educational realities that are not conducive to the educational development of all learners. These factors are often exacerbated by youth's disengagement from the political process, which all but guarantees that politicians will not to respond to youth's needs and demands.

Yet these issues do not affect all youth the same way in Canada. More often than not, Aboriginal youth and youth from minority communities face more problems than others. This is not difficult to understand, since these two groups come from communities that have traditionally suffered more marginalization. As early as the early 1960s, John Porter's remarkable study of political and economic power in Canada uncovered how Aboriginal peoples were at the bottom of his vertical mosaic analogy (Porter, 1965), with many groups from cultural communities also not far removed from that space.

So what has changed for these groups since the 1960s with regard to public space empowerment and the quality of their citizenship rights and achievements? As Curtis and Helmes-Hayes (1998) have found, the original character of the vertical mosaic has hardly changed at all. Therefore, Aboriginal youth are one of the more significant groups belonging to the local precariat in almost all categories of life.

We also intend to identify all marginalized and activist youth in Canada and elsewhere as members of a relatively new block of the local and global precariat. The members of this fairly new group are in a position to demand their citizenship rights via different means and tactics that help them achieve the democratic contexts of engagement and inclusion they deserve. It is through this multi-pronged, analytical, critical but still contextually fluid lens that we will examine youth engagement, not confining our observations to other issues that affect different youth groups in Canada.

While the above description discusses a number of weak spots in citizenship that are worthy of analysis and need to be remedied, we will also look beyond what is missing and examine how youth are organizing themselves in an attempt to once again become engaged citizens.

We looked at a number of cases in which youth have become organized actors for citizenship. The members of these groups claimed and exercised



their political potential, and used their formal and informal education to achieve an enlightened, critical reading of societal contexts and to design important organizational and employment opportunities that have elevated their voices in the public space. Their efforts remind us all that youth citizenship engagement in Canada is selectively present, thriving, and able to establish inclusive, forward-looking opportunities to achieve political, cultural, social, and economic well-being.

We have decided to look into the socio-political structure of three contemporary Canadian youth movements to give our readers a better idea of some of the more forward-looking youth engagement projects in Canada's public (and to some extent private) spheres. The first movement we examine is Lead Now, a youth organization that focuses on enhancing democratic processes in the Canadian public space. Next we take a closer look at the members of the Journey of the Nishiyuu and Idle No More, Aboriginal youth protest groups that are engaging in an ongoing response to the political and economic marginalization of indigenous people. The third movement involves student mobilization in response to changes in the organization and funding of higher education in the province of Quebec.

THE CASE STUDIES

As Canadian youth face increasing exclusion from economic engagement, with youth unemployment rates persistently close to three times higher than that of Canadians over 25 (Canadian Labour Congress, 2013), concerns over the levels of political engagement have increased as well. These concerns, however, tend to centre on the diminishing participation in formal political institutions.

In this article, we present three cases where Canadian youth have organized to create spaces for political, social and economic action that we also identify as citizenship education spaces. These actions aim to shape the political agenda in Canada through citizenship engagement that goes beyond the traditional limits of typical representative democracy toward deliberative and radical democratic acts of engagement.

Youth in Canada, as in other Western nations, find themselves outside the processes and structures of democracy due to several factors including a vastly diminished public sphere where public policy processes have become



de-politicized and the bailiwick of partisan decision-making meetings. In addition, youth have had a depoliticized citizenship education in schools where obedience has replaced forms of dynamic public involvement. The cases we have cited indicate that youth-based social movements aimed at addressing very important public issues indicate that important shifts may be taking place in young people's public participation.

It is notable that mainstream media have done very little reporting on these social movements, covering only outside isolated events that were either violent, featured highly dramatic individuals, or those that might make a momentary short "story". Even those news headlines were temporary and were not able to follow the emerging interactions as social movements.

Before we describe the above-mentioned social movements, we would briefly like to discuss the issue of representative democracy. It is a label that has been attached, not only to dominant Canadian political relations, but to almost all systems in Western countries, and now, owing to the imperatives of globalization and the hegemony of Western governance, to everywhere else.

But what is representative democracy in reality? From a critical perspective, the answer should not be very difficult. One of its principal claims is full and inclusive participation by all members of society and certainly participation by "all members affected" by an issue or concern. More often than not, however, the word "representational" is neither descriptive of nor practically applicable to youth, since their issues are invisible, except when they are positioned as consumers or "future" citizens. Indeed, contemporary labels for youth such as Generation X and Generation Y tentatively or even directly demonstrate that youth are neither understood nor appreciated except when it comes to the electronic and wireless technologies that have been feverishly commercialized for their supposedly non-political and non-economic – but psycho-cultural – consumption. Thus, the case studies should provide us with important details of acts of citizenship and the essential issues that have motivated Canadian youth to create significant, meaningful citizen engagement opportunities.

CASE 1: LEADNOW (WWW.LEADNOW.CA)

Leadnow is a youth-developed and led organization formed in 2011 before the Canadian election to build a collaborative political movement across Canada to defeat the ruling conservative party. Leadnow describes itself as a "peo-

ple-powered change” organization (www.leadnow.ca. Retrieved August 30, 2013). With a dynamic flow of thousands of participants, depending on time and location, Leadnow states its main vision and/or focus as: “an independent advocacy organization that brings generations of Canadians together to achieve progress through democracy” (www.leadnow.ca. Retrieved August 30, 2013). Participants “[work] together to build a stronger democracy that protects our environment, that creates economic opportunity, while increasing equality and guarantee(ing that) everyone receives the care they need” (www.leadnow.ca. Retrieved August 30, 2013).

The organization works to claim space in a political sphere that has become very restricted because of the national and provincial governments’ commitment to neoliberal public policy. Leadnow educators and advocacy experts help Canadian citizens (of all ages) work to set the political agenda within the formal, national government arenas. All of the founders and organizational leaders are young. They live in cities and regions across the country and make extensive use of social media to organize activities and carry out their mandate of shaping the political agenda in Canada. The staff mobilizes youth by organizing events, such as teach-ins, to promote a very participatory style of democracy and engagement in the public sphere.

The organization also works to shape the public’s understanding of youth (challenging the idea that youth are apathetic) and the issues that concern youth. Advocacy campaigns address issues of social inclusion, environmental justice, and economic equity. Although the organization clearly expresses the intention of being widely inclusive, it is not clear from the available online data how youth from historically marginalized groups such as the indigenous population, or immigrant and refugee groups, are involved in the planning and implementation of the activities they stage.

Leadnow actively encourages Canadians to meet in small groups to build a collaborative network where differences can be understood and a common political agenda developed. “Kitchen meetings” are encouraged in which participants gather friends, colleagues and family members together to share food and stories and prepare the political network for change.

Along with activities that deepen personal engagement in the network, Leadnow’s community teach-ins and extensive use of electronic media widen the organization’s reach. Therefore, its aim is not so much to make a social and economic difference, but a political one (as demonstrated through formal political party affiliations). Through cooperation, it attempts to find

ways of reaching the common goal of shaping (and changing) the national political agenda and building “a stronger democracy that protects our environment, creates economic opportunity while increasing equity, and guaranteeing that everyone receives the care they need” (www.leadnow.ca. Retrieved August 31, 2013).

CASE 2: JOURNEY OF THE NISHIYUU AND IDLE NO MORE

In the winter of 2013, a group of indigenous youth from the James Bay area of northern Canada walked 1600 kilometres as a political act to express their solidarity with an increasingly popular social movement known as “Idle No More” (INM). The journey of the Nishiyuu youth started with just seven young people committed to improving the conditions in their community and “celebrat(ing) and strengthen(ing) the unity of indigenous people” (Mathias, 2013, p. 8). Throughout the journey from their small, remote village, these youth, drawing on the traditions of their ancestors, persevered despite winter temperatures of -50 to -55 degrees Celsius, to bring their community’s concerns to the Canadian Parliament. The Aboriginal People’s Television News (ATPN) reported on their arrival in Ottawa:

When the Journey of Nishiyuu walkers climbed the steps below the Peace Tower and turned, they saw a crowd of thousands gathered below them. RCMP and OPP crowd estimates ranged between 4,000 and 5,000 people. The walkers, Jordon Masty, David Kawapit Jr., Stanley George Jr., Travis George, Johnny Abraham, Raymond Kawapit and Gordie Rupert had “etched” their names “into the history of this country,” said Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn Atleo (Barrera, 2013).

As the youth made their way to Ottawa, they stopped in communities along the way, where they spearheaded community education events and celebrated their achievements with community members who shared their food, music, stories and homes with the young leaders. Youth from these communities then joined them in the walk, becoming part of the political awakening that had emerged from their efforts.

As a side note, we must remind the reader that Canada’s Aboriginal population, who are the original owners of the land, form about 4.5 percent of Canada’s population (about 1.6 million out of a total population of 35 mil-



lion). They have suffered long and systematic schemes of oppression and deprivation that have affected all aspects of their lives. While their struggle for equality has taken many shapes, the recent emergence of well-organized and more determined youth groups has shed important light on the basic human rights that indigenous peoples in Canada are fighting for.

The Journey of the Nishiyuu coincided with the political actions of another indigenous leader, Chief Theresa Spence, who went on a six-week hunger strike to protest the Canadian government's refusal to meet and discuss the deplorable and deteriorating conditions on the First Nations reservation. At the same time, the INM movement was sweeping across Canada, mobilizing people and ideas for political, social, environmental and economic change: "The INM calls on all people to join in peaceful revolution to honour Indigenous sovereignty and to protect the land and water" (www.idlenomore.ca. Retrieved August 30, 2013). INM stated its purpose as "build(ing) allies in order to reframe the nation to nation relationship" (www.idlenomore.ca. Retrieved August 30, 2013) and "to include grassroots perspectives, issues and concerns" (www.idlenomore.ca. Retrieved August 30, 2013). One of the youth leaders, Natalie Mathias, is quoted in *Windspeaker* magazine on her arrival in Ottawa on March 25, 2013:

I joined the walk to support the youth across all our nations, and to show that we are still walking like our ancestors did, like they used to do back then," Mathias explained. "We want to show the government that we are fighting to protect our lands... This is the time to unite, for us all to get together. Even if you're not First Nations, you're part of the reason why we're fighting for Mother Earth, to protect the Earth. Because she's being polluted and she's sick, and we want our future generations to live and practice the traditional ways that we lived in the woods (Ball, 2013, p. 7).

CASE 3: QUEBEC STUDENT PROTESTS 2012

In February, 2012, Quebec students went on strike to protest tuition fee increases of about 75% proposed by the provincial government. Ingar Solty (2012) estimates that 300,000 of Quebec's 400,000 students joined the strike that came to be known as "the Maple Spring", suggesting it was part of a global youth movement like those in Chile, the Middle East, the United



Kingdom and Europe, where students were demanding public education be defended against the wider political projects that have resulted in an increased dismantling of the public sphere. A May 2, 2012 article in a United Kingdom newspaper, *The Guardian*, described the student actions in Quebec as “a revolt against government tuition fee hikes that is growing into an Occupy-inspired dissent against austerity and inequality” (<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2012/may/02/quebec-student-protest-canada>. Retrieved August 27, 2013). A red square became the symbol of the protests and could be seen on people and places around the world, as many acknowledged that “being in the red” or in debt is a serious and unacceptable problem facing youth everywhere.

This youth-led political protest action also mobilized people who were not students to come forward and criticize widespread corruption in local and national politics, neoliberalism and austerity measures that were destroying the social fabric of Canada and join demands that environmental protection be given priority over the interests of the oil energy sector. The protests were highly organized and supported by well-established democratic student organizations and large coalitions such as l'Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante de Québec (CLASSE), Federation Étudiante Collegiate de Québec (FECQ), and the Federation Étudiante Universitaire du Québec (FEUQ). These organizations did not necessarily agree on dissent tactics. For example, Martin (2012) suggested that CLASSE reject lobbying “as it perceived the interests of the state as irreconcilable with those of the students; [CLASSE] believes in creating leverage against the government through grassroots mobilization and various means of escalating pressure” (para 14).

While the massive numbers of students who gathered each day and night to protest were united against the tuition increases, there were two very different groups reflecting different perspectives of the tuition hike problem. One group, positioning itself as anti-neoliberal and anti-capitalist, viewed the long-term neoliberal agenda as the foundational problem to be addressed. Their calls for action were to resist the move toward a commercialized, marketizing education in favour of a more humanist one where education was seen to be an important part of the public good.

A second group expressed agreement with neoliberal calls for participation in a “knowledge economy” and argued that education was key to their individual success, as they had to navigate the demands of a global economy.



They argued that tuition increases would mean students left university with too much debt and could not afford to have the global mobility required to be successful in the economic environment.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

YOUTH ACTIVISM & THE PUBLIC SPHERE

While each of these three cases demonstrates many differences, together they give us a significant amount of information about the public sphere, as the youth engage and challenge what has come to be called *publicness* in Canada. We witness their contributions by more than just what they say – by what they do as engagement. Their acts of citizenship are what contribute to reshaping the public sphere. These acts are now part of the public story and of the options that are opening in Canadian society.

Growing up under neoliberalism, most youth today have spent their lives hearing about and experiencing the shrinking of the public sphere. The youth activism we see emerging challenges both the neoliberal view of the citizen as an obedient, self-sustaining, mobile individual engaged as an economic agent, and the norm of traditional partisan mobilization around a common issue. Canadian youth are demonstrating that not only are they viewing the issues in multiple ways, but they are also acting in ways that make connections to different social and political actors, spaces, and knowledges.

All three of these youth-led initiatives embraced difference and were able to see their own position as part of wider issues and concerns. This is an important contribution to a public sphere that has been shaped by discourses and practices of separation, categorization and an overall drive for homogeneity through consensus.

Canadian youth are often described by other Canadians as “non-involved” because of their low voter turnout, as if this were the sole act of citizenship on which to base one’s claims to participation. Youth citizenship is described through a litany of deficiencies that tend to make most of young people’s needs and contributions invisible. In fact, all three cases presented here make three important contributions to reshaping *publicness* through engagement. Isin (2008, 2009) describes how shifting our analysis from the citizen



to “the act” helps us see the wider impacts of engagement and particularly to see acts that might rupture “the given” (2008). In addition, the profound humanizing of *publicness* demonstrated by / in all three cases is significant not only in what these groups are demanding, but how they choose to mobilize sympathizers.

The Nishiyuu youth’s long journey on foot, where communities along the way gathered to host and be educated by the youth, is a very powerful example of engagement. The youth draw on community and ancestral knowledge to give motion to their demands for justice, linking history to new spaces and sites of contestation, belonging, identification and struggle.

The Quebec student protests, with their massive demonstrations that included thousands of people banging on pots and pans claimed the public sphere in a very dynamic, physical way. The expectation was not that all members of the movement be “on message”, as has become the depoliticizing model of Canadian policy processes, but that there are multiple experiences and issues that movements can embrace thereby contributing to reshaping *publicness as a broad inclusiveness*. However, this is not the highly individualized acts of neoliberals, but a range of loosely-coupled organizations and student groups that acted as an emerging network to focus the public’s attention on and fight for a particular political issue. As descriptions of the protests circulated on social media and in the traditional press, the network gathered strength and was able to claim public space (both political and territorial) and citizenship rights (to assemble and for public education).

In the case of Leadnow there is an ongoing, very creative, democratic call for participation in the Canadian political process based on the values of social, environmental, and economic justice rather than initiatives drawn along traditional political party lines. The commitment and clarity of their goals and actions give a renewed hope for the future of politics for those of us who have watched all things public be chipped away through the rhetoric of inefficiency and also outright neglect. This organization demonstrates considerable wisdom, claiming space in Canadian politics by changing the narrative of democratic engagement through dialogue and network mobilization.

Thus, it is another significant contribution to rebuilding the Canadian public sphere. It is just as Paulo Freire noted when describing Spanish factory workers’ process of awareness (see Llewellyn & Westheimer, 2013). Learning about the structures and conditions of one’s oppression is not found in “direct questions about ideas and understandings of politics” (Llewellyn &



Westheimer, 2013, p. 232) but in the authentic relationships that emerge between people committed to creating transformational democratic spaces. Such educational praxis for democratic engagement (Llewellyn & Westheimer, 2013) provides openings for rethinking youth as participating citizens.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND YOUTH DECOLONIZING ENGAGEMENT

As several Canadian studies have demonstrated, understanding both the categorization of youth and the enactment of this category requires that we examine contexts (Archer & Wesley, 2006; Chareka & Sears, 2006; Llewlyn, Cook & Molina, 2010; Llewlyn & Westheimer, 2013; Viczko, 2012). Our case studies have highlighted youth movements linked to significant issues centred on justice: concern over anti-democratic governance; growing exclusion from policy considerations; a government that ignores the impact of environmental destruction on the lives of non-urban (and mainly aboriginal) citizens; and a government that primarily obeys external, international financial institutions rather than the citizens within national jurisdictions.

In each of the case studies, albeit to varying degrees, the youth activists were linking urgent environmental justice, economic justice, and social justice issues to everyday actions and educational citizenship activities. We have written elsewhere of the power of decolonizing approaches to relations of power, governance, and engagement (See Abdi, 2012; Shultz, 2012, 2013). As Walter Mignolo (2011) points out, decolonizing can be seen as working outside the “rules of the game (s)” of colonialism, neo-colonialism, and neoliberalism. Youth social movements such as those described here show how youth are finding their way toward the outside “game” realms in order to find spaces to work toward justice.

As we have shown, youth, in our particular definition of the term, denotes persons who harbour the expectation of full citizenship but who so far have been prevented from using their creativity, insight, energy, and vision to either contribute to or benefit from being in a given society. Instead, they bear the unequitable burdens of this very society by virtue of their exclusion.

Youth are demanding to be viewed as more than consumer citizens or temporary workers (or future workers), the positions conferred upon them by local and global elites, and politicians. They have a heavy stake in the environmental, economic and social present and future and are ready to make their views known.



YOUTH ACTIVISTS AS PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS

Canadian politicians can no longer expect youth to be silent or silenced regarding the important issues that face their society. While almost all provinces and universities have some form of organizational structure for youth participation where they can (occasionally) demand their educational rights, which include tuition issues, the extent to which other groups have their demands met, when seen in contrast with the Quebec initiatives, is interesting.

While tens, or occasionally, hundreds of students might come out to publicly express their needs, the numbers in Quebec are in the thousands. Indeed, Quebec is not only unique in Canada, but, with the exception of Mexico, in all of North America. While, for example, South American students are known to have well-organized student movements that demand and usually win their educational rights (the recent Chilean and Colombian student uprisings illustrate this), post-1960s North American protest movements can, at best, be described as “muted”. In fact, the Quebec movement can actually be described as being as strong as those taking place any in other part of the world. While at the moment we do not have the analytical capacity to explain this, we can perhaps mention as an underlying factor the strong culture of trade unionism in Quebec. During the last student demonstrations, for example, Quebec’s powerful trade unions lent their support to the movement. This with other traditional forms of resistance that have kept Quebec Canadians strong within the Anglophone majority, have shaped what citizens, including youth, see as possible responses to unacceptable government actions.

This current wave of student activism fits well with Giroux’s (2013) depiction of student activists as the new public intellectuals. The profile of the public intellectual or what the public intellectual should actually be is, of course, a matter of contention. Generally students have not been categorized as public intellectuals. However, with the conventional, anti-establishment public intellectuals (academics, think tank researchers, widely quoted commentators and journalists, and others) now in decline or at the service of the various branches of business and the state (Wiseman, 2013), the space may now be opening up to students and others.

Indeed, not only the students from Quebec, but the other two groups we have discussed, might also lay claim to this particular public space. With



the media that focuses on such debates now favouring young people (as so-called digital natives, they are more savvy in conveying their messages via social media), we may also need to redefine who qualifies to be a public intellectual.

In the case of Aboriginal youth especially, the issue is also linked to the fact that their ideas, knowledge systems and overall life perspectives are more marginalized than those of other modern-day youth. Indeed, in Canada at least, those formally or informally dubbed as public intellectuals have hardly ever advanced the interests of Aboriginal peoples. On the contrary, it is common knowledge that some of the most influential intellectuals to wield a powerful influence with the current conservative government (e.g., Tom Flanagan who also contributes to Wiseman's new book, *The Public Intellectual in Canada*) are not necessarily known for their pro-Aboriginal stances. The same can be said of other interest groups that impact youth citizenship. Even in the Quebec students' protests, while the trade unions did lend their support, some of the most important media outlets were not as supportive. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), the biggest television and radio system in the country, was actually accused of being biased against the students:

CBC coverage of the Quebec student protests in downtown Montreal today is driven by a painfully obvious bias against the student strike. (...) News reports via CBC have consistently failed to scrutinize violent police actions against striking students, and the station's coverage bends toward the austerity-driven logic of the Quebec government's policy to hike tuition fees (montreal.mediacoop.com).

It shouldn't be surprising that established media usually represent established powers that tend to support the conventional order. Indeed, with the proliferation of epistemologically marginalizing labels such as Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Me that have been heaped upon today's youth, it is no wonder that powerful institutions will, by and large, present youth rights demands as problematic, disturbing, and even dangerous.

Clearly, though, the youth are no longer at the mercy of conventional media. With savvy familiarity and use of new social media, they may be able, for the first time, to beat such media at their own game and use their own expertise to create news and counter-conventional perspectives about their lives and education and needs.

Yet more importantly, as we discuss and analyse these issues, it is important is to view youth citizenship from the perspective of opportunities, not as a source of problems. The persistent view of youth citizenship as one that is incomplete should be put into the context of those original, formal citizenship constructs, such as those of classical Greece, for example, in which only adult men with property were citizens. The reality in which youth, women and indigent men were not citizens is still a current socio-political pathology we haven't fully overcome. The best way to achieve a more comprehensive view of this is to look at current global power distribution. By far the most endowed group citizenship-wise in the world continues to be the group that was so endowed millennia ago. It is therefore, important to recognize today's issues of youth citizenship and social engagement as part of the ongoing struggle to promote the social, political and economic profile of those wishing to enjoy the full rights and privileges of citizenship.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have offered broad, analytical and critical perspectives of the realities and opportunities of citizenship contexts and youth engagement programs. Viewing citizenship and youth engagement from a local and global perspective, we have broached the proliferation of global citizenship scholarship and one-directional discussions that most often do not represent the rights of youth or those who live outside the political boundaries of the West.

We have also highlighted cases in which youth organizations have become more politically engaged, staking their claims to citizenship rights that may allow them to become valid agents for claiming and reclaiming their citizenship.

To shed more light on the issue, we have described the work of the three engaged youth movements: Leadnow; Journey of the Nishisyuu and Idle No More; and the Quebec Student Protest groups, all of which have eschewed the inactivity characteristic of much of the youth scene in contemporary Western democracies including Canada. In our analysis we have also looked into new ways of construing youth activism, and how the work of so-called public intellectuals should respond to the important issues of citizenship engagement and relationships. Certainly, such interactive realities will enhance public debate and invigorate the reconstruction of Canadian citizen-



ship and democratic life. These movements also tend to establish more inclusive public policy opportunities that cater to the immediate and long-term well-being of communities. This is important because these communities do not usually benefit from the usual structures present in “representative” democracies which are, as we said above, basically the organized rule of the elite acting on behalf of the elite.

The actions of the movements described here are creating better prospects for Canadian citizenship. They may serve as examples for youth elsewhere in the world who are also exposed to the global rhetoric of democracy without enjoying many foreseeable or palpable benefits.

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**CITIZENSHIP IN ACTION:
YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 2010-2011
NEW ZEALAND EARTHQUAKES**

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ABSTRACT

Young people's declining civic and political participation is the subject of much public and media angst. This article argues for a fresh look at the concern. Evidence to support a new way of viewing participation is drawn from a study of the way in which young people (early-teens to mid-twenties) spontaneously demonstrated their abilities to engage in civic and political actions in the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes that hit the New Zealand city of Christchurch and the surrounding district of Canterbury during 2010 and 2011. The actions of these young people is set first in the context of relevant research, focusing on literature that critiques or offers alternative explanations of young people's seeming lack of engagement in civic and political activities. This is followed by a study of the collective actions motivated and managed by young people after the New Zealand earthquakes, such as the Student Volunteer Army and the Ministry of Awesome. These actions are theorised against several explanatory frameworks in order to promote an understanding of a more youth-centric view of young people's participation.

KEY WORDS

Youth engagement; Participatory citizenship; Disaster responses.



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Citizenship in Action: Young People in the Aftermath of the 2010-2011 New Zealand Earthquakes

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INTRODUCTION

University students sometimes get a bad rap; they are most likely to be seen on the television news partying, living in squalid flats or protesting about fee rises. But in the wake of the devastating quake, thousands of students put down their beers and books to lend a hand to those in need (The Press, 2011, p. 119).

In 2010 and 2011, the Canterbury region of New Zealand, including the city of Christchurch, was hit by a series of major earthquakes. One of the strong memories the people of Christchurch have to this day is of crowds of young people dressed in shorts and T-shirts, wearing gumboots, carrying shovels and pushing wheelbarrows, descending on their streets and working away until their hands were raw. These thousands of young people won the respect and admiration of locals and the media. The Student Volunteer Army became a blueprint for youth-centred disaster response activities, nationally and internationally. This article first sets the young people's civic engagement in the context of relevant research literature, before describing in detail the collective actions motivated and managed by young people (early-teens to mid-twenties) after the Canterbury earthquakes. These actions are

then theorised against several explanatory frameworks in order to promote a more youth-centric view of young people's participation and extrapolate the implications for citizenship education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on citizenship, citizenship education and civic participation is vast. In order to keep the summary of the literature for this article relevant, it has been limited in scope to more recent studies, studies from New Zealand (or contexts similar to those of New Zealand) and with a focus on young people's civic or political understandings and behaviours. No attempt was made to engage in debates on what citizenship is, its origins, or the role of education in promoting citizenship. These matters are well discussed and debated elsewhere. The focus here is on empirical studies which attempted to go beyond a normalising rhetoric of what good citizenship *should* look like to attempting to understand it from the perspective of young people themselves, in order to contextualise the events described later in the article.

Studies aiming to critique the view that young people's participation is in decline often begin by citing the literature that promotes these claims (see for example, Bourn, 2008; Harris, Wynn & Younes, 2007; Keating, Benton & Kerr, 2011; Martelli, 2013; Wood, 2012). Martelli suggests that young people's perceived lack of engagement "has represented, in the last few decades, a source of perplexities and fears by adults as to continuity and social cohesion in contemporary society" (2013, p. 3). Hartras (2011) describes the situation this way: "Disaffection is typically ascribed to young people's lack of participation, display of anti-social behaviour, lack of social/civic engagement and subsequent marginalisation and general antipathy towards mainstream education and lifestyle" (p. 104). Thorson (2012) outlines what adults consider as the "normative core" of good citizenship such as gaining political knowledge, exercising the right to vote, and joining voluntary associations. She continues:

However, our discussions and debates about democratic ideals, valuable though they are, tell us little about the day-to-day lived experience of citizenship and almost nothing about whether today's young adults are well-resourced to think through what it means to be a good citizen within the swirling, choice-filled complexity that defines twenty-first century life (Thorson, 2012, p. 70).

In order to refute the claim that young people are disaffected or apathetic, writers often take one of two paths: they find explanations external to young people (for example, neoliberalism, globalisation or rising youth unemployment) or more internal explanations (for example, the tension between young people's earlier physical maturity and later social maturity). Martelli (2013), discussing the situation in Europe, explains that among the most common trends cited to explain the 'de-traditionalisation' and 'de-standardisation' of the concept of youth are: the delay of entry into adulthood, such as remaining at home for longer; the awareness of life's uncertainties, leading to a tension between autonomy and social dependence; and a growing gap between the culture and lives of youths and those of their parents' generation. He argues that youth should be seen as a resource rather than a problem, especially in a world of post-democracy where citizens are becoming further detached from politics and institutions. Harris, Wyn and Younes (2007) use external explanations: the breakdown in structured pathways to adulthood; the diminishing relevance of formal institutions; and the disintegration of traditional civic affiliations. Wood (2013) highlights the neo-liberal concept of participatory citizens as those who are valued by society for their contribution to economic growth, a model that marginalises many young people.

Research confirms that young people from low socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to engage in civic and political action and such discourses further alienate them. Summarising a range of literature, Bourn (2008) highlights themes of political devolution, economic migration, global terrorism and consumer culture as all affecting young people's views on citizenship and identity. Every day young people experience the forces of globalisation on their employment prospects, friendship patterns, use of technology and changing lifestyle.

Some writers include a rationalisation for the importance of young people's participation. They assert that this participation can have educational, personal development and societal benefits (Hartras, 2011). A rights-based justification to youth engagement, such as that promoted by Lansdown (1994, cited in Taylor, Smith & Gollop, 2008) centres on three sets of rights: participation, provision and protection. Taylor, Smith and Gollop go on to argue:

If children develop a belief in themselves as social actors who have some control over their own lives then they are less likely to depend on others for



copied with problems... Encouraging children to express their opinions and feelings about citizenship (and other issues) also signals respect for children as human beings (2008, p. 196).

The view of the pathway from youth to adulthood as a linear, step-by-step journey is seen as in need of revision (Keating, Benton & Kerr, 2011; Martelli, 2013). Writers also query views of young people as “not-yet-citizens” (Lawy & Bestia, 2006), “citizens-in-the-making” (O’Loughlin & Gillespie, 2012) or “pre-citizens” (Harris et al., 2007). Harris et al. ask:

Are they “bowling alone”, as per Putnam’s (2000) famous thesis: atomised and apathetic about politics, or are they creating new and exciting kinds of participatory practice using emergent technologies or their identities as consumers? (2007, p. 20).

A common theme in the literature highlights that participation is not unproblematic (Hartras, 2011). Micheletti and Stolle (2012) researched how notions of participation in citizenship are changing, especially among young people, as they engage in sustainable citizenship practices in which they take more responsibility for economic, environmental and equitable development through, for example, boycotting and ‘buycotting’ products and lifestyle choices.

Such writers ask if it still appropriate to judge young people’s participation by adult-centric measures. Wood (2012) critiques the traditional approach of measuring participation by standard criteria such as voting, joining groups and voluntary work. She states, “Many studies employing mainstream political definitions conclude that young people are largely disinterested in politics, disengaged from formal political activities and unlikely to participate in many future democratic processes” (p. 2). By viewing citizenship as a fluid process rather than a static position, she argues, adults can begin “[to] recognize the ambiguity, contradictions, and heterogeneous nature of citizenship understandings held by young people” (p. 12).

In bringing the research closer to the young people under investigation in this study, recent research provides an insight into New Zealand young people’s understanding of citizenship and their enactment of these understandings. The findings from the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (Lang, 2010) show that New Zealand young people are generally well prepared for their roles as citizens in the 21st century, although there

are variations among young people of differing gender, ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

In order to gain an insight into young people's thinking, Taylor, Smith and Gollop (2008) conducted focus group interviews in New Zealand schools. They used an activity in which the young people described citizenship rights and responsibilities in an imaginary country, which they created as part of the research task. The authors' analyses of the citizenship rights that the young people had highlighted in these imaginary countries were: the rights to respect and participation; safety and protection; and a healthy lifestyle. They also included access to education, economic resources and leisure activities. The responsibilities of citizens in these imaginary countries were grouped around good personal attributes, environmental awareness, working within societal norms and laws, altruism and volunteerism. The researchers concluded that, "children and young people are able to contribute meaningfully to discussions about their rights and responsibilities, to understand how people become citizens, and to participate positively in their homes, schools and communities" (Taylor, Smith & Gollop, 2008, p. 207).

In another New Zealand study, Wood (2012) also used a focus group methodology but through a more fluid café style approach, which began with open-ended statements and which were facilitated by the students themselves. She triangulated the findings from the focus groups by using photovoice, a method in which the participants used cameras to record and represent their everyday lives and then engaged in critical dialogue based on their chosen images. Wood found that young people grounded their concept of citizenship in ordinary activities as well as more strategic decisions and practices. A small decision to *do* or *not do* something, such as buy a particular brand, could represent a far bigger political or ethical consideration. She also found that young people's notions of citizenship were complex and dynamic, "in the process of being (re)formed and (re)constructed through peer-based discussion" (Wood, 2012, p. 10) and these notions were a regular part of their everyday social and citizenship actions. Wood concludes: "These everyday conversations give insights into how diverse young people also hold contested, multiple and complex understandings of citizenship, and that these understandings evolve in the context of social interactions and experiences" (Wood, 2012, p. 11).

Humpage (2008) undertook focus group research with a wider, more representative group of New Zealanders, which included but was not limited to



young people. She found that the notion of citizenship was not as important to New Zealanders' identity as notions of family or community. The participants, however, were able to clearly articulate what a 'good citizen' was. The strongest characteristic of a good citizen was community participation (volunteering, neighbourliness, caring for others and contributing to society). The second strongest characteristic reflected humanitarian attitudes (respect, reciprocity, compassion and egalitarianism) while being law abiding, having loyalty to one's country, and being democratically active were of lesser importance. Interestingly, Humpage found that neo-liberalism had not had as strong an influence on changing people's attitudes as is often claimed. She concludes:

Against predictions, the findings further suggest that neo-liberal reforms have not eliminated a belief in community spirit and collective solutions to social problems. Although New Zealanders do believe that individuals should be responsible for themselves, they also expect government to ensure the social and economic conditions that make this possible (Humpage, 2008, p. 121).

Australian and British studies offer similar findings. Harris et al. (2007) suggest that Australian young people "connect with civic life in new ways that are directly related to their more fragmented and individualised biographies" (p. 19). These new ways include less collective affiliation, greater use of emergent technologies and using recreation and consumer choice in political ways. Wearing (2011) suggests that Australia can learn from both European and British models that focus on inclusion of marginalised youth as a pathway to youth citizenship. This can be achieved by understanding the social, economic, institutional, territorial and symbolic factors at play. British studies cited by Bourn (2008) found that young people's identity was forged locally using family and friends as resources but expanded by cyberspace into creative, fluid and eclectic positions on social and global issues. Keating, Benton and Kerr's (2011) longitudinal study revealed that young people in England did become more politically active, such as on student councils, and civically engaged, for example through fundraising, as they moved through the schooling system, although with a dip in their mid-teens, possibly due to examination anxiety.

Finally, various writers offer new or amended explanatory frameworks in the hope that young people's participation might be better recognised,

understood, encouraged or celebrated. Lawry and Bestia (2006) suggest that a better way to view the acquisition of the state of citizenship is as a “cradle-to-the-grave” trajectory that all citizens, including young people, move through. Martelli also argues for a broader view of citizenship:

In fact, citizenship appears as a process relating both to the social and institutional practices applied in the political and judiciary sphere that affect people’s daily lives, and to the inclination of individuals and groups to provide meaning to citizenship in terms of belonging, identity and culture (2013, p. 3).

These frameworks and themes from the literature provide a context to examine the creative and innovative participatory and political actions of New Zealand young people in response to the recent earthquakes.

BACKGROUND

On September 4, 2010, an earthquake measuring 7.1 magnitude on the Richter scale rocked the Canterbury region of New Zealand, including the city of Christchurch (pre-earthquake population approximately 400,000). It caused widespread damage to buildings and infrastructure. Liquefaction and flooding affected many areas and made moving around the city difficult. The quake caused billions of dollars’ worth of damage. Thousands of people were removed to emergency shelters in local schools and sports centres. It was expected the city and surrounding districts would take years to recover. Continuing aftershocks hampered much of the recovery effort.

Before the fragile city could recover, another shallow 6.3 magnitude aftershock on February 22, 2011, situated much closer to Christchurch’s city centre killed 185 people and left thousands more injured or homeless. The central business district was cordoned off, and a stunned city tried to come to terms with a bigger disaster, more damage, and an even longer recovery time. Several more major (6.3 magnitude) aftershocks in June and December amid the 12,000 on-going aftershocks, continued to damage the city, causing over 40 billion dollars’ worth of damage, shattering frayed nerves and hampering the recovery process.



SEPTEMBER 2010: YOUNG PEOPLE MOBILISE

After the 7.1 earthquake struck Canterbury, on Saturday, September 4, 2010, many people used social networking media to contact friends and family and share their experiences. My son, who was a student at Canterbury University at the time, told me that someone had set up a Facebook page calling for student volunteers to help after the earthquake. I was very impressed with this initiative. Being the mother of a young person, I knew that they could sometimes be hard to motivate. I was even more impressed when my son returned home from his volunteering duties and I discussed his day with him and came to understand the size and the complexity of the operation. I got a better idea of the enormity of the logistics of organising, transporting, briefing, feeding, managing, and looking after the volunteers. As a citizenship education researcher, I saw this as “citizenship in action” and was determined to find out more. Over 2010 and 2011, I followed the progress of the student volunteers and this re-telling of their story is drawn from my interviews with Sam Johnson, the young person whose initiative created and sustained the volunteer effort throughout the Canterbury earthquake sequence. There are growing precedents for using a narrative style in reporting this type of research, see for example, Lewis and Gillis’ (2008) account of their Hurricane Katrina experiences.

At the time of the September 2010 earthquake, Sam Johnson was a university student studying law at Canterbury University. In his part of the city, despite the enormity of the September earthquake, access to the Internet was still available. With the university closed due to earthquake damage, he thought that there might be a way to channel student time and energy into helping those in need. One of the immediate challenges was the large amount of liquefaction (sand, silt and sludge, often mixed with sewage, forced up through cracks in the ground by the force of the earthquake, which spreads quickly and sets to a hard concrete-like mass).

After having no success with the formal earthquake response organisers (Civil Defence, the City Council, the Army, Urban Search and Rescue and later CERA, the government agency managing earthquake recovery), he set up a Facebook page called the Student Volunteer Base for Earthquake Clean Up. He invited his friends to join the clean-up effort and asked them to text or facebook all their friends. He encouraged them to search out shovels, wheelbarrows and gumboots. On the Monday after the earthquake, Sam arrived in



the suburb of Halswell. He expected to find about 60 student volunteers but over 300 turned up. On that first day, students had to use their own initiative to arrange transport and find out where and how they might help. By lunch-time, Sam became aware that the volunteers would need to be fed. The local supermarket had been hard hit and they were not sure if they would be able to provide food for the volunteers, as there was hardly enough for local families. Sam matched a donation of \$50 from a local resident with his own money and paid for bread to make sandwiches to get the volunteers through the day.

The next day, the student volunteer effort had grown and taken on a life of its own. As interest grew and replies came in, Sam and the core team of six student volunteers also spent time making sure that whatever they did met with official approval. They contacted Civil Defence, City Councillors and local Members of Parliament to ask where the best places to offer this help might be. The growing ranks of the student volunteers meant that the organisations charged with earthquake response and recovery needed to take the volunteers seriously. The volunteers were therefore asked to meet at a local school where they were briefed by Civil Defence and the Army to ensure that no-one – students or public – was put at risk. It was also important that everyone complied with the regulations related to the region's state of emergency.

One of the logistical problems, which Sam and his team then had to deal with, was how to keep track of everyone. If there was a major aftershock, everyone needed to be safe and accounted for. The students were asked to sign in and sign out. In order to do this accurately, they selected a mobile management system that could send and manage large numbers of text messages. Several student volunteers were then assigned to manage the text communication system.

By Tuesday night, the story of the student volunteers, who became known as the Student Volunteer Army, had been picked up by the media. This was to result in even more young people volunteering in the following days. It also brought in donations of money and goods, the largest of which was from the Ministry of Youth Development. This meant that costs of food, transport, water, hand sanitizer and cleaning up equipment could be covered. On Wednesday, after arranging buses, students were dispatched to several of the worst hit areas to assist with liquefaction and rubble removal. This effort continued every day for the next two weeks until the university and other educational institutions began to re-open.



Each day required logistical arrangements for transport, communication, funding, supplies, food, water, access and safety. Sam clocked up 44 hours on his cell phone with behind-the-scenes arrangements to keep everything running smoothly. Media reports suggested that over 3000 student volunteers from the two universities, the polytechnic and secondary schools had joined the ranks of the volunteers. Six weeks after the September quake, an analysis of media reports showed that the students' achievements during the earthquake had been praised by local and national politicians, including the Mayor and the Prime Minister. They had been reported on television and radio, appeared in local, national and international newspapers and on the Internet.

Once schools and other educational institutions were re-opened and young people went back to their studies, it would have been understandable if the volunteering effort ceased. But it did not stop there. A volunteering network was set up, so the impetus was not lost and a central team could recruit and manage student volunteers for on-going earthquake and non-earthquake projects.

YOUNG PEOPLE AS ROLE MODELS: FEBRUARY 2011 AND BEYOND

Fast forward to February of 2011. A large aftershock much closer to the centre of Christchurch devastated the city's business district and created new and further damage to the city and surrounding districts. Educational institutions were closed again for several weeks until arrangements were made for closures, temporary premises, relocations and site sharing. Despite tens of thousands of people fleeing the city, the Student Volunteer Army swung into action very quickly. This time the relationships with Civil Defence and the first response organisations were already in place and the Student Volunteer Army now had strong credibility. The infrastructure to manage large numbers of student volunteers, which had been created by trial and error in September, had been further refined through the volunteer network in the time leading up to the February quake.

Ironically, Sam was away at an emergency response conference at the time the February earthquake struck, but many of the original Student Volunteer Army members, including Jade Rutherford, were available. In September, Jade

looked after administrative tasks: organising the volunteers, fielding the calls and working with sponsors. In February, she managed the Facebook site and other communication links. “I oversaw all of the emails... this time everybody in New Zealand had my phone number”. When a national television channel advertised the Student Volunteer Army contact details, Jade recalls, “I literally just watched and there was like a 1000 emails or something in like five minutes” (Jade Rutherford, cited in Gordon, forthcoming).

Not only was it seen as a badge of honour for young people to be part of the Student Volunteer Army and earn a green volunteer T-shirt, the national airline, Air New Zealand, offered \$50 airfares to anyone who wanted to fly into Christchurch to help with the February clean-up. This swelled the ranks of student volunteers from the 3300 registered in September to varying reports of 15,000-18,000 young people from all over the country. The handful of students who managed the volunteering logistics in September grew to nearly a hundred operational staff who worked out of a large tent on the university’s grounds in February.

The volunteers shifted 360,000 tonnes of silt and sludge and contributed more than 75,000 working hours (The Press, 2011). The Student Volunteer Army also became a blueprint for how other volunteer organisations might operate. Many rural young people, for example, joined the 4000 strong Farmy Army set up by the Federated Farmers organisation that brought their heavy machinery to Christchurch to assist with clearing liquefaction and rubble. Many young people also worked in conjunction with relief organisations, such as the Red Cross, or community organisations, such as the Rangiora Express (an operation that helicoptered meals in to the hardest-hit suburbs) or local *marae* (Māori community centres). Others just helped out in their local street. In my neighbourhood, they came to the local supermarket to clean up the broken glass, to help in the library restacking books or to deliver relief supplies and disaster information to households.

The on-going aftershocks, especially in June and December, caused further damage. Many people described the 6.3 June quake, in the middle of an especially cold winter, as the one that “broke their spirit”. Many residents were faced with cleaning up liquefaction for the third time. The students continued to respond as best they could. Jade recalls, “June was really difficult because it was awful weather, it was exams or take home tests, whichever way it went, and we definitely had volunteer fatigue by that point; the



students had a terrible start to the year and the semester was ending on a bad note as well” (Jade Rutherford, cited in Gordon, forthcoming).

As 2011 came to an end and the immediate clean-up activities were winding down, the task of recovery and rebuilding began. Young people continued to be engaged in a range of creative post-earthquake initiatives. These included: Greening the Rubble (bringing colour and greenery to the vast tracts of demolished building sites and piles of rubble); Gap Filler (producing interesting and creative art works and activities that brought life to vacant spaces); and the Pallet Pavilion (a café and performance space created from re-cycled wooden pallets). Two of my favourites, because they encapsulate the ability of young people to ‘do good’ but without taking themselves too seriously were the Ministry of Awesome and the activities of superhero, Flat Man. The Ministry of Awesome was an offshoot of the Student Volunteer Army, which aimed to make use of the creative and innovative spirit shown by young people in response to the earthquakes and, perhaps, turn these entrepreneurial ideas into successful businesses. The anonymous university students, known as Flat Man and the Quake Kid, delivered food parcels, alongside the Red Cross, to struggling families and quake-hit residents. Their efforts caught the eye of a local businessman who donated a 1970 yellow Chevrolet Camaro, which, as the Flatmobile, assisted with these deliveries (Anderson, 2013). The organisers of these and other initiatives were often able to gain funding from government, businesses and charities to assist with their activities. In 2013, many of these initiatives are still operating with new ones continuing to spring up as the city moves through the recovery and rebuilding phases.

In 2013, the Student Volunteer Army is still active. Students at Canterbury University can join the army as a university club and two of the founding members, Sam Johnson and Jason Pemberton have gone on to create the Volunteer Army Foundation (VAF). This year, the VAF co-ordinated a free rock concert for volunteers. In return for four hours of donated time on particular projects, volunteers earned free tickets to the concert. Although aimed at young people, the opportunity to continue volunteering was taken up by a wide selection of the city’s population: “We had truck drivers, plumbers and tradies [tradespeople] and many retirees. A couple of ladies in their 70s came and said the concert was part of their ‘bucket list’” (Jason Pemberton, cited in McCrone, 2013).

Following the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami in Japan in March 2011, Japanese students asked, via Facebook, if someone could come to Waseda Univer-

sity to assist in setting up a similar student volunteer scheme. Sam and Jason gained sponsorship to fly to Japan to help out. Similarly, in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy in New York, Jason and Jackson Rowland answered the call to help students there contribute to the hurricane clean-up effort. The efforts of Sam, Jason, Jade, Jackson and others have been recognised locally, nationally and even internationally. The Student Volunteer Army has been recognised at various municipal and national award ceremonies. Sam received a Sir Peter Blake leadership award, a Communicator of the Year award and, in 2012, was selected as Young New Zealander of the Year.

In summarising what he had learned from his experience, Sam highlighted several important factors. One was that although the language was of the army (squadrons, battalions and troops), the structure was not hierarchical. There was a central core group and then layers of overlapping groups spreading out in concentric circles. In September 2010, there were six students in the central group who each had their own core functions but also had an understanding of how the organisation functioned as whole. In February of 2011, this central team expanded to 15 and was supported by a further 70 administrators.

The groupings of students were organised flexibly around tasks that needed to be done at any one time (answering phones, obtaining equipment, providing transport, delivering food, shovelling liquefaction or fixing the wheelbarrows). By allowing students to opt in and out and work with the skills and interests they had, it was easier to create a sense of ownership of the task and keep up their motivation.

A further way of keeping up motivation was to organise the tasks so that the students could see the fruits of their labour quickly. Thus, rather than spreading the volunteers too thinly, they would put a group of 20 to work on a property and within an hour or two the difference could be clearly seen.

Being students themselves, the organising group knew what young people needed: food, drink, music and fun. Once the word got out, there was no shortage of donations of food. One incident Sam recalls was of a truckload of baking for the volunteers arriving from a small town some distance away. Sam commented, "Not even we could eat that much home baking!" There was more than enough to keep the students fed and happy so they divided it up and delivered parcels of baking to each house in the areas in which they were working.



Finally, one of the most important tasks was to connect with and bring cheer to the communities, especially to those who had lost everything. The volunteers were overwhelmed by the response they received from locals and the volunteers certainly helped dispel the image of young people as self-centred and lazy. The current Student Volunteer Army (SVA) website has a section on the history of the organisation and they comment on the importance of the wider connection to the community:

While the central task was the mass-deployment of volunteers to shovel liquefaction from properties, a strong focus was put on the wellbeing of residents; showing a presence in the streets offering hot meals, clean water and guidance to professional assistance. The SVA also supplied and managed operations for various organizations including multiple government departments, Civil Defence, and city council. Our objective was to increase the efficiency in specific services, for example delivering chemical toilets and information pamphlets, laying sandbags, staffing data entry and manning call centres.¹

DISCUSSION

In this section, I take three theoretical frameworks and use these to examine the young people's actions more analytically. Firstly, I discuss Thorson's (2012) concept of citizenship vocabularies. Secondly, I consider the possibilities offered by Wood's (2013) notion of participatory capital and, thirdly, I relate these to Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) three views of the good citizen.

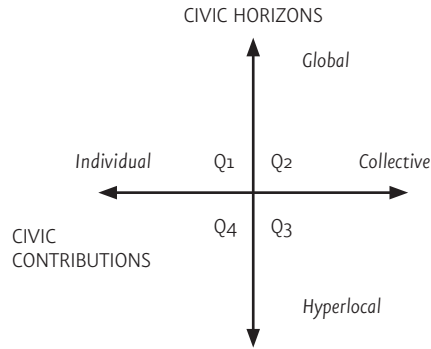
CITIZENSHIP VOCABULARIES

Thorson's (2012) model is based on the assumption that how people understand themselves as citizens impacts their perceptions of their citizenship rights and obligations. She argues that this understanding can be examined through the notion of citizenship vocabularies, which reveal the possibilities that individuals consider that they have at their disposal. She claims

¹ Retrieved from: <http://www.sva.org.nz/index.php/svatheclub>.

that it is the breadth of possibilities, and the flexible ways they can be utilised that is more important than their coherence.

FIGURE 1
CONCEPTUAL MAP OF CITIZENSHIP VOCABULARIES



Source: Thorson, 2012, p. 74.

Thorson’s model (see Figure 1) has two intersecting axes creating four quadrants. The vertical axis indicates where young people’s citizenship vocabularies appear on a continuum of civic horizons. Thorson calls these “the imagined fields of action” (p. 74) – communities you feel you have membership with from hyperlocal through to global. The horizontal axis is a continuum of civic contributions from individual to collective. Four quadrants represent the “entanglement of civic contributions with civic horizons” (p. 74). In Quadrant 1 (Q1), a young person would imagine a good citizen as someone whose focus did not go beyond their immediate circle of family and friends. The emphasis would be on being a good person who looked after their family members and worked hard at their job. In Quadrant 2 (Q2), the imagined community is still at the local level but the possibilities include acting collectively. In Quadrant 3 (Q3), the outlook is global through collective action as part of an organised group. Quadrant 4 (Q4) returns the imagined responsibility to the individual but the focus is on how individual action could change the world.

Overall, the young people in this case study conceived the good as being one who acted individually or collectively for the good of others. Their volunteering responses to the Canterbury earthquakes displayed their ability to act in creative, innovative and flexible ways. In order to do this, they

needed the confidence to put their plans into action and a strong sense of autonomous decision-making.

Their post-earthquake activities, exemplified by highly original ideas such as Greening the Rubble, Gap Filler and the Ministry of Awesome, were further examples of their ability to imagine infinite possibilities. While some young people worked at the individual and hyperlocal level (Q1), it was engagement at the collective and community level (spanning quadrants 2 and 3) that captured their interest. The leaders of the Student Volunteer Army were later able to use the opportunities offered to them to move to the global level by taking their expertise to Japan and the USA, and since then, to a range of other international contexts. Understanding that young people can create possibilities through their citizenship vocabularies is a useful citizenship education concept to be further explored. This leads to Wood's (2013) notion of participatory capital.

PARTICIPATORY CAPITAL

Wood (2013) expands her argument for viewing young people's citizenship participation in new ways by drawing on Bourdieu, and posits the notion of participatory capital, which she describes as: "combined and interrelated social, economic and cultural capital related to the logic, network and practices of citizenship participation within a social field" (p. 2). Participatory capital can be seen as a resource for young people to draw on as they shape their civic imaginings. Wood's research showed that levels of economic, social and cultural capital impacted students' ability to see themselves as global citizens and those with fewer resources were limited to highly localised visions and practices. Thorson (2012) also suggests that not every young person has the same access to these possibilities and agrees that better education appears to be linked to the capacity to create expansive citizenship vocabularies.

While the young people who initiated and managed the Student Volunteer Army were university students, and therefore more likely to have succeeded in the education system and emerged with higher levels of social, cultural and economic capital, the volunteering movement captured the imagination of all sectors of society. As schools and other higher education institutions were closed for weeks at a time, it was understandable that students might volunteer first. It gave young people something to do but many were also

genuinely motivated by wanting to help. Other young people, whose employment was in hiatus due to much of the city being cordoned off, also joined the Student Volunteer Army, the Farmy Army and the many other grassroots initiatives. People who were still employed often joined the volunteering efforts in their weekends. Even as late as 2013, the “truck drivers, plumbers and tradies” mentioned by Jason were taking up the volunteering call. The levelling nature of the disaster context opened up these citizenship possibilities to a wider range of young people.

Wood also notes (2013, p. 15), “It was apparent that young people not only passively received participatory capital, but they also actively created and constructed participatory capital in a number of ways...” and she details the ways in which young people enacted their participatory capital by responding to issues and making changes in their local communities. The innovative and creative responses to the earthquakes highlighted that many young people did have extensive citizenship vocabularies (Thorson, 2012) and constructed participatory capital in unexpected ways. The creators of the Student Volunteer Army drew on complex and intricate understandings of social, economic and cultural capital to garner resources, harness energy, cultivate credibility and mobilise support. They used their technological inventiveness and political acumen to become a force to be reckoned with. Viewed through this lens, it brings a new understanding to the way in which young people not only navigate and negotiate their way to adulthood and its concomitant citizenship and political expectations but also adapt the rules of the game along the way. In order to consider the kinds of citizenship possibilities they might have at their disposal, it is helpful to examine Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) three views of citizenship.

THREE CONCEPTS OF CITIZENSHIP

In their study, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) found that three views of the good citizen underpinned approaches to education for citizenship: *personally responsible*, *participatory* and *justice-oriented*. Programmes that aim to produce *personally responsible citizens* focus on individual character traits such as honesty, integrity, self-discipline, respect, courtesy and compassion. The assumption is that society will become a better place if everyone acts responsibly and with self-discipline. Programmes that aim to produce *participatory citizens* set out to encourage students to actively participate in school, community, local



and national affairs. Skills of communication, collaboration and facilitation are fostered to bring collective and creative solutions to societal problems. Thirdly, are programmes that promote *justice-oriented citizens*. In order to do this, it is important to go beyond an understanding of rules and laws or the functioning of government, to examine the social, political and economic forces that shape society and how these allow inequity and injustice.

The Canterbury earthquakes provided numerous examples of personally responsible citizens in the form of people who donated money and goods for disaster relief. The outpouring of grief and support was highly visible as ordinary New Zealanders found ways to communicate their empathy through words, gifts, money and services. Throughout the disaster recovery processes, there were also many examples of the participatory citizen. The earthquakes led to the mobilisation of students, farmers, communities and many others who set up volunteer groups to cover a wide range of needs. Finally, there were examples, although not as numerous, of the justice-oriented citizen who focused on underlying causes of injustice for those disadvantaged by decision making processes relating to earthquake response and recovery. Where do the actions of the young people who engaged in the many post-disaster volunteering activities fit?

Were they personally responsible citizens? The thousands of young people who contributed to the various formal and informal response, recovery and rebuilding activities acted with energy, commitment and compassion. But as Sam pointed out, it was significant that their participation was fluid; they could work when, where and as they wished. For some it helped fill in the time. With intermittent electricity, they were cut off from their electronic gadgets and with damage to the roads and infrastructure, going anywhere was difficult. Part of the motivation was also a sense of adventure, of doing something new and different. They were self-motivated and acted responsibly but they responded more willingly because the impetus came from themselves. There was no formal compulsion or expectation. Interestingly, it did become a peer expectation – a badge of honour – to be able to talk about your part in the clean-up activities. It was even reported that young people looking for local employment were asked whether they had been part of the Student Volunteer Army. While young people's immediate responses might satisfy some criteria for personally responsible citizenry, it was complicated by the fact that it was always on their terms. They were compassionate and hardworking but they were not helping out of a sense of compliance. In

fact, it was quite the opposite. The Student Volunteer Army was a grassroots initiative, self-generated, coordinated from within, managed through social media, with enough incentive to provide motivation but the flexibility to opt in and out at will; and this is precisely why it worked so well.

In what ways did these young people portray the characteristics of participatory citizens? There is no doubt that they displayed high levels of initiative, problem solving, facilitation, organisation, and collaboration. They harnessed social media to recruit, organise, manage and coordinate. The logistical management was detailed and complex and it was undertaken without training or technical facilities. No problem seemed insurmountable. Handled badly, thousands of student volunteers could have ended up being a hindrance to the disaster recovery process and a danger to themselves. Instead the Student Volunteer Army became an exemplar of creative and coordinated post-disaster civic participation.

Did their activities make them justice-oriented citizens? While most young people's actions probably fit into the participatory category, Sam and the other creators of the Student Volunteer Army found that to meet their goal of helping those underserved by the formal earthquake recovery system, they initially needed to by-pass traditional procedures and protocols. In order to channel the energy and enthusiasm of the hundreds of young people initially answering their call, they had to ignore the authorities and make their own rules. Had they followed orders and stayed at home, the Student Volunteer Army would have been no more than a handful of hardy souls pottering around in their local neighbourhoods. Because of the state of emergency, they did need to fall into line with approved ways of operating, but they were willing to challenge the command-and-control approach of the official post-disaster response machinery. That a group of highly-motivated and enthusiastic, if not slightly naïve, young people in green T-shirts could have something important to teach experienced disaster responders, not to mention local and national governments, is a lesson for us all.

CONCLUSION

This article began by drawing attention to the literature that critiques the widespread belief that young people are disaffected, apathetic and uninterested in civic and political affairs. The literature highlights the need to un-



derstand more about how young people view and act in civic-minded ways and what it means to them to take political action. Some of the reasons for their alternative ways of enacting citizenship are external forces, such as the economic downturn, neo-liberal agendas, job uncertainty and limited future prospects. Other reasons include life's uncertainties, which have decreased their autonomy and increased their social dependence, leading to a delayed adulthood. Young people come to develop more flexible identities and fragmented loyalties. Traditional structures have not created a safe and equitable society, so they look beyond these structures and use new technologies to create and connect with communities of interest.

It is apparent, however, from a range of empirical studies, that young people do have clear and articulate views on citizenship and politics. These can vary from focusing on their immediate communities to engaging in global campaigns. While their political actions are more likely to be framed around everyday actions and choices rather than formal politics, they do become actively engaged in relevant issues and make more use of the formal political system as they get older.

A detailed description of the activities of young people in the aftermath of the devastating series of earthquakes in Canterbury, New Zealand in 2010 and 2011 provided a case study of spontaneous grassroots youth-centric civic and political action. These young people used a wide range of citizenship skills to motivate, engage and co-ordinate thousands of young people in volunteering efforts throughout the earthquake response and recovery sequence. They did this in spite of initial resistance from authorities and went on to create an effective mechanism for providing practical help and emotional support to hard-hit disaster communities.

Strikingly, they found ways to continue the momentum well beyond the time of immediate need and make volunteering an appealing and on-going community activity. A fifteen-year old I spoke to recently said he had clocked up 120 hours of volunteering since first joining the Student Volunteer Army. As Christchurch moved through the recovery and rebuilding phases, young people adapted their innovative responses and made them more relevant with activities such as Gap Filler and Greening the Rubble. All this has been done with energy, commitment, creativity and good humour. Flat Man and his Flatmobile have brought a smile to many faces.

Three conceptual frameworks – citizenship vocabularies, participatory capital and views of citizenship – provide tools for analysing civic engage-

ment and assessing the implications for citizenship education. The concept of citizenship vocabularies assists us, as educators, to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to envision a wide range of civic and political possibilities. Participatory capital reminds us to provide the citizenship skills and contextual understandings that can turn the possibilities into action.

Examining the young people's actions in light of traditional views of citizenship demonstrates that our role is to enable young people to frame new conceptualizations that will harness their insights, encourage their initiative, and give them the opportunity to shape a new world – one that might have a better chance of solving some of the world's "wicked problems" (Rittel & Webber, 1973). The young people who mobilised in a time of need and rewrote the rulebook of collaborative disaster response have shown us that anything is possible.

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**THE STRUGGLE FOR “THICK” OR TRANSFORMATIVE CITIZENSHIP AND
DEMOCRACY IN AUSTRALIA: WHAT FUTURE TEACHERS BELIEVE AND
WHY IT IS IMPORTANT**

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses pre-service education student perceptions and perspectives related to education for democracy in Australia. Using a critical-pedagogical framework to analyse data from an on-line survey, the paper presents both quantitative and qualitative responses to contrast understandings of democracy. The paper begins by outlining the concepts of thick and thin democracy, and revisiting the (parlous) state of civics and citizenship education (CCE) in Australia. Overall, pre-service teachers in this study display a tendency to view democracy in a very narrow or thin way that may impact their classroom practice.

KEY WORDS

Civics and citizenship education; Neo-liberalism; Democracy; Critical pedagogy.



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The Struggle for “Thick” or Transformative Citizenship and Democracy in Australia: What Future Teachers Believe and Why it is Important

David Zyngier

INTRODUCTION

Reducing the notion of citizenship to a set of dispositions, skills, practices, and ideals that can be “delivered” and then performed by purely conscious rational subjects in institutions that are often not even organized democratically, not only ignores the tensions of governmentality but also disregards the importance of automatic, non-conscious learning in human cognition (Fischman & Haas, 2012, p. 185).

While there have been important studies of how school students understand democracy and democratic participation¹, there has been no such study of teachers. The study of what teachers and especially pre-service teachers think about democracy has not been attempted before. This paper discusses how a representative sample of Australian pre-service teachers perceive, experience and understand democracy, especially democracy related to education. Determining the linkage between education and democracy is important as it may have implications for how students themselves relate to democracy (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004b) both in the classroom and in

¹ IEA-CIVED Civic education study 1999 and 2005 (see <http://www.iea.nl/cived.html>).



society. This paper is informed by the need to critically understand the perspectives and experiences of educators in relation to democracy in education (Carr, 2007, 2008).

This paper builds on research from the international *Global Doing Democracy Research Project* (GDDRP)², which currently has some 50 scholars in over 25 countries examining perspectives and perceptions of democracy among pre- and in-service teachers, teacher education academics, and educators, in general. It is also part of a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada study and an Australian Research Council project that have received over \$500 000 in funding.

These studies are using a collaboratively developed and locally contextualised on-line survey tool to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from diverse groups of educators³. Each researcher is responsible for the analysis of the data within the shared critical pedagogical framework that was originally developed by Carr (2010b). The aim of the research, ultimately, is to compare and contrast these findings and implications across diverse political contexts, including the *old* democracies (countries such as the USA, Australia, Canada and England), *emerging* democracies (those countries coming out of autocratic, military or other dictatorships and/or colonial rule), and what we have termed the *new* democracies (places and countries that may be doing democracy differently as a result of public initiatives found in Latin America and elsewhere).

The broad objective of our various research projects is to collect and analyse data from a significant number of participants from diverse contexts in order to determine with greater authority how democracy is perceived, experienced and undertaken in and through education. The result would then enable the elaboration of specific tools, measures and practices at the local, national and international levels, taking into consideration where diverse constituencies start, as well as their contemporary realities.

2 The Global Doing Democracy Research Project was established in 2008 by David Zyngier and Paul Carr who are co-directors. While there are many on-line networks created among academics for the exchange of ideas, the development of such an on-line activist research group focused on democracy and democratic education is uncommon.

3 At this time, the on-line survey has been translated in to Portuguese, Spanish, Bhasa Malay, Greek, Turkish, French, Russian and Arabic and has been adapted and applied in over 30 international contexts. The comparative analysis of the data gleaned is an on-going, major task for the Global Doing Democracy Project.

THE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE PERSPECTIVES, EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS IN RELATION TO DEMOCRACY IN EDUCATION

Studying the perspectives, experiences and perceptions of educators, and how they understand, cultivate and anchor democracy within the educational experience is considered an important piece of the equation in the development of a more participatory, empowered and engaged citizenry that safeguards democratic society. Contemporary debates about citizenship are not just about who is and is not a citizen. Rather, they ask: Is citizenship a status or a practice? Does citizenship liberate or control populations? Is citizenship only national or could it also be cosmopolitan and transnational (Fischman & Haas, 2012, p. 171)?

THIN AND THICK DEMOCRACY AND THE ROLE OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Democracy means many things to many people. The research project which this paper reports on seeks a more robust, critical, *thicker* interpretation of what democracy is, what it should be, and, significantly, how it can be beneficial to all peoples (Carr, 2010a). Our research critiques the belief that elections are the key component to building a democracy.

The research of the author and associates and others over the past several years has raised the pivotal concern of what role education plays in forming, buttressing, cultivating and sustaining a meaningful, critical democratic experience for all sectors of society (Banks, 2001; Lund & Carr, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004b). The shift toward and acceptance of market-based neo-liberalism in education has had a wide range of well documented and widely accepted consequences for society (Porfilio & Carr, 2010).

Democracy incorporates strong participatory and deliberative elements in which citizens are engaged at local and national levels in a variety of political activities and regard discourse, debate and deliberation as essential conditions for reaching common ground and arbitrating differences among people in a large, multicultural society. Participatory citizenship expects every member of the community to participate in self-governance, which ultimately leads to the building of a strong democracy (Green, 1999).



Deep or thick democracy goes beyond just the formal institutional framework that outlines or governs how society should function and is a set of structures, concepts, habits and practices that reach out to the community as well as to the very core of individuals. There is an element of interconnectedness with the community in which people are able to voice their opinions freely and learn from others about creating spaces for social transformations by including the under or disenfranchised and not merely focusing on the needs, aspirations and prosperity of the select few – the elites (Green, 1999).

Democracy must be constantly cultivated, conceptualized and re-worked, with less dependence on formal political processes and cycles of elections, and more emphasis on critical engagement in developing the conditions for emancipation, enhanced power relations, and epistemological discovery that may lead to some of the virtues that are commonly extolled when discussing democracy (freedom, liberty, rights, common virtues, etc.). Critical pedagogy offers a framework to understand political literacy and social transformation, in which static representations of power, identity, and contextual realities are rejected (Darder & Miron, 2006; Denzin, 2009; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). This is not about providing a checklist to determine the level of democracy within a given society (Carr, 2008). Rather, it aims to identify oppression and marginalisation at all levels, and seeks to interrogate, problematise and critique power and inequitable power relations.

The traditional approach in civics/citizenship education in schools focuses on understanding formal political structures, and is often confined to a single unit of study in both primary (elementary) and secondary (high) school education. Preliminary research undertaken by team-members in this project underscores how educators in Canada, the USA, Peru, Argentina, Brazil, Malaysia and Australia generally have only a superficial conceptualization of democracy (Carr, 2010a; Carr, Zyngier & Pruyn, 2012; Westheimer, 2008).

This paper analyses data collected in Australia. It seeks to understand, add depth to and contextualize how those involved in school education comprehend, experience, perceive, and implement democracy in education. Defining the linkage between education and democracy at the educator level is important, as we believe that it may have far-reaching implications for the delivery of teaching and learning that influences how students relate to, and do, democracy (Lund & Carr, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004b) within the classroom, within the school and, more broadly, at the societal level.

The discourses on democracy have been variously characterized in terms of representative versus participatory democracy⁴, with the former highlighting thin electoral processes, and the latter focusing on *thick* critical engagement and social justice. The notion of *thick* and *thin* democracy, attributed to Gandin and Apple (2002), builds on the seminal work of Barber (1984, 2004), who raised pivotal questions on the relevance of liberal democracy. His work discusses the tension between individualism and the rights of all citizens as framed by concepts of *shallow* and *deep* democracy and suggests that participatory citizenship demands that every member of the community participate in self-governance, which ultimately could lead to the building of a strong democracy. This tension has been problematic and even disenfranchising for many citizens.

What Furman and Shields (2005) call ‘deep democracy’ attaches “significant value to such goods as participation, civic friendship, inclusiveness and solidarity” (p. 128). Deep or *thick* democracy, according to Furman and Shields, espouses a number of principles that champion individual rights and responsibility within diverse cultural communities in the interests of the common good.

In practice, *thin* democracy is exemplified in activities such as students contributing to a food drive, whereas *thick* democracy would explore why people are hungry (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004b). Through the notion of *thin* versus *thick* democracy, we conceptualize the visible tension between the superficial features often associated with teaching *about* democracy and the fundamental scaffolding which permits people to appropriate the deeper meaning of the term teaching *for* democracy. Bolstering efforts to teach through the academic disciplines – whether pursued through high-stakes exams or well-crafted curriculum frameworks – is insufficient to further the goals of teaching *for* democracy (Davies & Issitt, 2005).

NEW CIVICS AS THIN DEMOCRACY

In Australian school education this tension has played out in the Civics and Citizenship Education (CCE) program. The rhetoric of active participation found in these programs usually is “not achieved in the activities that are provided for school students” (Davies & Issitt, 2005, p. 404). Dejaeghere and Tudball (2007) conclude that most recent assessments of the CCE program

4 Others have referred to democratic binaries such as weak and strong (Swift, 2002), passive and active (Criddle, Vidovich & O’Neill, 2004), minimalist and maximalist (McLaughlin, 1992).



suggest “further work is required to promote depth and breadth” (p. 41). The lack of agreement on the philosophical and practical applications of education for democracy led to the exclusion of concerns about social justice from the material distributed nationally to every school which was orientated towards a *thin* understanding of democracy. Giroux boldly states that

Democracy cannot work if citizens are not autonomous, self-judging, and independent – qualities that are indispensable for students if they are going to make vital judgments and choices about participating in and shaping decisions that affect everyday life, institutional reform, and governmental policy (2006, p. 73).

Schwille and Amadeo (2002) in their analysis of the Civic Education Study (CIVED, 1999) argue that “as long as parts of the political system aspire to foster active, informed and supportive citizens, schools will be considered a possible means to this end” (p. 105). Schools which model democratic practices in classrooms, by creating an open climate for discussing issues, are most effective in promoting civic knowledge and engagement in *thick* ways; however, this is rarely found in schools (Kahne & Westheimer, 2003).

Democratic citizenship education is generally one of the central aims of public schools and the social studies curriculum in particular. One has a hard time finding a curriculum document that does not trumpet “the preparation of students for informed citizenship in our democratic society” or words to that effect (Fischman & Haas, 2012).

The CCE Project in Australia, like others elsewhere, places a “growing emphasis on the promotion of civic awareness and individuals’ rights and responsibilities embedded in discourses of citizenship” (Garratt & Piper, 2008, p. 486), highlighting the conflicting discourses in citizenship education (Criddle, Vidovich & O’Neill, 2004), which “permeate both policy production and policy practices across all levels” (p. 32).

The CCE project emphasises a passive consumption of knowledge about citizenship with a strong historical focus – *thin* democracy – whereas what is required is more critical and active participation⁵ in change, which is labelled as an ‘active citizenship’ – *thick* democracy.

5 There are examples of some critical intentions in the unit on the Indigenous Freedom Fighters which seemingly defies any neo-liberal interpretation. It is about indigenous activists in Australia in the 1960s. While these are acknowledged, it remains that overall the materials support a broadly conservative approach to history and politics.

Many researchers (Forsyth & Tudball, 2002; Knight, 2000; Tudball, 2005) have extensively critiqued the CCE curriculum for its restricted or *thin* scope, reflecting the struggle over how democracy is to be perceived. Overwhelmingly we see that the *thin* concepts of citizenship of “privilege, education markets and individual choice at the expense of public and democratic purposes for education” (Reid & Thomson, 2003, p. xi) privileging the “aggregation of individual votes ... [that] endorses hierarchy, elite agency and mass passivity” (Seddon, 2004, p. 173) – that has been dominant. Davies and Issitt argue that CCE “seems in the eyes of policy-makers to be the instrument by which societies can find a way still to cohere in the face of new challenges” and compensate for “civic deficit” (Davies & Issitt, 2005, p. 393), concluding that this form of *thin* democracy has promoted a pragmatic conservatism.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Critical Pedagogy (CP) underpins the analytical approach to understanding how democracy is perceived. CP considers how education can provide individuals with the tools to better themselves and strengthen democracy in order to create a more egalitarian, equitable and socially just society. It seeks to empower the powerless and transform those conditions which perpetuate injustice and inequity. Unlike traditional perspectives of education claiming to be neutral and apolitical, critical pedagogy views all education theory as intimately linked to ideologies shaped by power, politics, history and culture. Using this framework of analysis signals how questions of audience, voice, power, and evaluation actively work to construct particular relations between teachers and students and classrooms and communities thereby illuminating the relationship among knowledge, authority, and power.

A previously validated instrument (Carr, 2008) was modified for the Australian context, and then administered anonymously on-line to pre-service teachers (PSTs) to identify their beliefs about democracy. It contained approximately thirty open and closed questions in three sections: (1) an introductory section requesting demographic information; (2) questions on democracy and education; (3) questions on citizenship, social justice and education. We did not define such terms as democracy, citizenship, and social justice to participants but, rather, asked them to do so. In addition to providing a quantitative score based on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, the survey



instrument invited respondents to expand on their answers. The research reported here has Human Research Ethics Committee and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development approval.

THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

This paper reports on the second stage⁶ of the research with over 200 respondents from the PST category⁷. The education students were from the faculty of one of the largest and most research-intensive universities in Australia, currently rated as 6th in the world.

This paper reports only on the questions relating to understanding democracy and focuses primarily on the narrative comments, using the quantitative scores as a means of providing an overview of the sample studied.

The PSTs (N=252) are part of an initial teacher education (ITE) course, predominantly female (80%) and relatively young, with 66% under age 30, 15% between 30-40 and 17% 41 years and over. 40% were undertaking undergraduate studies, 18% a double degree, 38% a graduate diploma or master in education⁸ and 2% doctoral studies. One third of the respondents were in their first year of study, with the rest evenly spread between the second and fourth years of study; 25% were studying early childhood education, 30% primary education, 40% secondary education, and 5% sport and outdoor education.

While 74% were born in Australia, 48% of their parents were born outside Australia and 22% spoke a language other than English at home when they were growing up. 74% identified as White/Caucasian, 17% as Asian and 0.5% identified as Aboriginal or First Nations. Almost one third of their fathers worked as manual labourers or skilled tradesmen and 31% of their mothers worked either in clerical, service or trades-related employment with 20% being home-workers. Reflecting the significance of teaching as a pathway for upwardly mobile and aspirational working and lower middle class families in Australia, over 25% of respondents' fathers and 34% of their mothers had

6 Stage 1 reported on the pilot program.

7 A very similar survey was also sent to teachers, academics and community activists. This paper reports only on the responses of the PSTs.

8 These courses are offered for post-graduate students who want to teach in schools and many of these are typically older and come back to study for a career change.

not completed 12 years of school. Significantly, 44% of the respondents are first in their family to do any form of tertiary education.

While 55% stated that they affiliated with a religion – Christianity, 4% Buddhist, 5% Moslem and 3% Jewish – of those who responded as having been affiliated to a religion, 60% no longer practised any religion.

Australians are sometimes thought of as a very relaxed and apolitical people, apart from membership in a trade union or professional organization, which have suffered heavy declines in recent years under the continued assault of neo-liberal political and media attacks. Australians do not join political parties as a matter of course, and this is reflected in the perceptions of the respondents about their parents. Most of the PSTs' (86%) parents were not politically active beyond compulsory voting as required in Australia. This could also reflect a generational viewpoint, with PSTs overwhelmingly being born in the late 1980s at a time of Australian political stability. There was no apparent significant correlation between the education level and employment type of the parents and their involvement in politics.

FINDINGS

This section reports on some of the key findings regarding particular understandings of democracy and seeks to understand them in relation to the framework of *thin* and *thick* democracy.

UNDERSTANDING DEMOCRACY

Participants generally related democracy to voting as the voice of the people. They possessed a limited understanding of what goes on in other countries and espoused a thin understanding of democratic principles, suggesting that being actively engaged in democracy is about staying current with political issues through watching or even reading the news. However, respondents were also critical of the lack of power the average person has over the decisions government has made in their name.

The majority of respondents stated that democracy was about personal freedom of opinion and free and fair elections where governments are chosen by the majority of people, with 87% stating that elections are very important to democracy. Overall, the vast majority (85%) has a *thin* concep-



tion of democracy with voting and elections as central to democracy, where individual rights are of equal value as those of majority or national interests and a narrow or non-existent engagement with alternatives to mainstream political parties. 25% nominated voting as the most significant aspect of democracy and 65% highlighted the “freedom and right to choose” as the essence of democracy and 30% raised issues of equality and fairness. Diversity in society, when mentioned at all, was understood in very narrow terms in generally essentialized ways with “limited linkages to (...) inequitable power relations” (Carr, 2010a, p. 333).

Yet there were also differences. A very limited number (5%) demonstrated a ‘justice orientation’ (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a, 2004b) through their understanding that democracy was also about recognition of difference and social justice. These respondents highlighted concepts such as “recognition of universal human rights and laws against discrimination; fairness and working towards equality for the people; power vested in the people; a government powered by the people that promotes equality and social justice”. Only 10% alluded to the concept of “power” that needed to be controlled by the people. One respondent commented that democracy is “a system of government where the power is in the hands of the people. Their political rights, needs and wants are demonstrated through elected representatives”. More critically another student commented that:

Democracy is intended to provide equality for all citizens of a country. *Formal equality* in terms of access to public systems of: health, education, employment etc. *Informal equality* in terms of social systems, within the “community”.

It was notable that a number highlighted the requirement to be able to speak freely without fear of retribution or punishment where “everyone has a say (...) when people listen and value your opinion”.

Only three respondents raised issues of social justice as being intrinsic to democracy “where members of society are treated as equal or social equality”. These two indicated an understanding that there is an unequal distribution of power and highlighted an “equal participatory role” where “all citizens have equal input”. One of these defined democracy as:

A political and social system based on social equality. It works on the basis that every citizen is equal and their vote carries the exact same weight as any other citizen, regardless of social, economic or cultural status. Key concepts of democracy include freedom of rights, civil liberties and political freedom.

Another cynically defined democracy as “hegemony of the ruling and elite class”.

DO YOU BELIEVE AUSTRALIA IS A DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY?

While there was a range of views on how democratic Australia is, some issues need to be highlighted. About one third of the PSTs indicated that they had serious concerns about the degree of democracy that they experienced in this country with only 20% believing that Australia is very democratic.

PSTs who felt that Australia is very democratic adopted a very uncritical acceptance of their previous *thin* definition of democracy, explaining their decision on the basis of *thin* conceptions, such as equality of rights, freedom of speech, and voting rights. Typical comments often made a comparison to other countries, including: “We are free to vote and speak out on issues that concern us without fear”; “Australia is a fair country”; “We have choice, rights and options in nearly every aspect of the community”; “The government listens to what the majority of people want”; “Everybody is able to have a voice here and there is an equality of opportunity”; and “Processes are equal, just and fair for all citizens”.

These respondents uncritically stressed the importance of elections: “We vote in a fair electoral process”; and “Anyone can run for a government position, regardless of policy platform and personal background. Education, information, and legal system is (sic) accessible to everyone regardless of personal background, sex, age, wealth”; and “Nearly everyone can vote. Voter participation is up around 95%, elections are fair”. One summarised this viewpoint as:

When you compare Australia’s system to the rest of the world, we are probably one of the top democratic countries. We are free and liberated to do almost everything that we want. More importantly, we can cast our vote without being watched by guards with weapons who will force us to vote one way or another. We are incredibly lucky.



However, many raised issues in relation to minority groups, especially the treatment of Australian Indigenous (First Nations) People, with over 75% believing that Indigenous Australians are not a full part of Australian democracy. One PST who considered Australia very democratic still added that “Australia has a long way to go in changing narrow minded, racist, bigoted thinking. I am amazed at how many Australians continue to harbour negative thoughts on new Australians, Indigenous Australians based on information gained through print and television media”.

On the other-hand, another student who also was of the view that Australia is very democratic, added that we need to “amend the Constitution to ban implementing Sharia law” and stated that:

Aboriginal people have no relevance to modern Australian society. Every country was once occupied by some race of people that no longer exists. Such is the case here. Other minorities: they can vote like the rest of us. However, the fact is, most minorities want to change Australian democracy to be more like where they came from, which is their right to try, but I think does not have mainstream support, therefore has no impact.

A significant minority (10%) were prepared to call Australia not democratic, highlighting that while “we flaunt that we have freedom of speech, equal rights and are fair to all, you will be thrown in jail before you actually get the chance to speak what you believe is wrong or should be changed”. Further, many of these mentioned the “class-based distribution of power” leading to reduced democracy. These reflected a thicker democratic analysis of class and social hegemony. The following is typical of their comments:

We live in a pseudo-democracy. Even though we get to vote and have a say, it does not go far and is not really taken on board by politicians as they have their own agenda. Underlying our society is still inequality [based on] the colour of your skin, gender and disability. Until this is rectified, we cannot have a true democracy.

Another such respondent stated that “there are very narrow ideas about education, ways of life, and languages dominating school systems (...) people don’t have full freedom because of their economic or social status”. Significantly, these were typically older; spoke another language at home; with

more studying early childhood and primary education on a campus where a number of academic faculty shared a critical pedagogical epistemology. In addition, their parents had more education and worked in the professions to a larger degree than the other respondents.

Typical comments stated that “as a country, by and large, we fail to cater for the needs of and often ignore the rights of our Indigenous peoples and those groups of people with limited access to the instruments of power (social, cultural and economic capital) such as refugees and migrants”; and that “consciously or not, racism and indirect discrimination is (sic) inherent in our society’s structures, schooling, workforce”. One stated that:

I have difficulty labelling it a true democracy [because] one particular type of citizen (high-status, white, Christian, high economic capital etc.) is being more valued (and more likely to have their wants and needs represented) than other citizens, including those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged. With institutionalised racism and discrimination common in Australia, many citizens are considered “second-rate”, including migrants and their descendants, refugees, indigenous Australians, women, those of low socioeconomic status and those with little cultural, social or financial capital, and it would be inaccurate to state that Australia values every citizen or considers every citizen to be of equal worth.

Another added more succinctly that “underlying our (Australian) society is still inequality for the colour of your skin, gender and disability; until this is rectified, we cannot have a true democracy”. A third questioned the power of money, “The rich can push their views more (too much)”.

These respondents, while in a minority, were able to differentiate between *thin* conceptions of democracy that emphasize elections and superficial equality of rights and a *thicker* democracy beyond voting to establish a clear connection with social justice. Typical comments from these respondents stated that “There are many disenfranchised people (...)”; “Some groups in society are disadvantaged in this system (...)”; “Many voices are silenced, including the many indigenous languages (...)”; “We still need a lot of work when it comes to our own indigenous people”. A very small number of PSTs also referred to power imbalances between social and economic groups because “the minority hold(s) the power and the voice in major decisions”.

The most critical of the PSTs who were negative about Australia’s *thinness* of democracy commented that “full participation (is) often dependent on



who you are and where you live". They referred to the rhetoric of democracy being "strictly reduced to majority vote via a political system which serves to turn the majority off from politics. Our representative system does not include enough public forums or encouragement to be involved in political matters of a public nature".

Referring to current issues, some cited the lack of democratic rights of Asylum Seekers and so-called illegal arrivals who "(we) lock away in detention centres and we do not accept our so called 'friends and allies' as climate refugees, who are suffering for the greed and consumption of the mining companies which our government protects above all". Alluding to the disproportionate distribution of power through wealth, one wrote about the "laws being passed now so that businesses can sue individual people, massive logging companies can sue individual protesters for millions just to shut them up".

Similarly, another wrote critically about the unequal distribution of power in Australia: "Top 1% of population has a disproportionate influence and power over government"; "Some people have equal opportunities but many do not – indigenous people and refugees do not have the same opportunities or support, so it is not equal and therefore not democratic"; "Some groups of society are not treated equally, as evidenced by policies such as the Northern Territory intervention"⁹. Another added that "Australian people do not have decision-making power in proportion to how much they are affected by the decisions (...) the wealthy have disproportionate power". Highlighting the superficiality of the choices available within the system, one wrote "that in reality we are dictated by the mainstream – white, middle-class and male – and the assumptions that everyone can access the things that make us powerful, and must necessarily want to, underpins our education and political systems".

These respondents were also able to highlight the lack of a thicker democracy, suggesting that "I don't think we have a very active democracy but only when citizens take a stand against government action (...) it is not very democratic in its 'norms' and values".

9 The Northern Territory National Emergency Response (also referred to as "the intervention") was a package of changes to welfare provision, law enforcement, land tenure and other measures, introduced by the Australian federal government under John Howard in 2007, nominally to address claims of rampant child sexual abuse and neglect in Northern Territory Aboriginal communities. Operation Outreach, the intervention's main logistical operation, conducted by a force of 600 soldiers and detachments from the ADF (including NORFORCE) concluded on 21 October, 2008. The package was the Federal government's response to the Territory government's publication of *Little Children are Sacred*, but implemented only two out of ninety-seven of the report's recommendations. The response has been criticised, but also received bipartisan parliamentary support.

A number also volunteered that they felt there is a strong link between education and democracy. They suggested that “some minority groups such as Indigenous people can sometimes not have their opinions heard due to a lack of education. Many people may also lack the knowledge of the working of this system failing to be beneficial for them (...) it provides a great way of life for those that are educated”. Again, this reflects an understanding that power can come with, and from, education.

TEACHING ABOUT AND FOR DEMOCRACY

We can learn that students have the power and intellect to mould their own education, because it is in fact their doing and their life of life-long learning (...) democracy is in the way we allow students to un-tap their own inner light and power, and we cannot do that if we are stapled to a standard that is not prioritizing empowerment and critique and change (PST).

While responses to many of the questions in the survey differed dramatically among the respondents, there was a previously unseen congruence with over 70% agreeing that teachers should promote a sense of democracy in students. One of those who were unsure (30%) whether teachers should strive to promote a sense of democracy stated, “Class isn’t a democracy; it’s a benign dictatorship. Democracy is an integral part of global history and society, so it’s important to learn about it and link knowledge into the broader social framework that democracy is a part of”. Another added, “They should (only) educate students on what democracy is”, while another, addressing issues of bias asserts, “as long as it is balanced and they respect the views of others. I don’t think one agenda should be forced but students should hear many voices”.

Others were concerned about issues of potential conflicts of interest and bias when dealing with controversial topics, stating that “this can be done neutrally though, not trying to influence children one way or another”. Whether one actually does this, however, a PST said depends “on whether bias or ignorance influences their presentations”.

Many (36%) returned to the importance of understanding the political and electoral systems, with comments such as: “I think students should be made aware of their voting rights, the way our system of government works and what democracy is opposed to” and “Students should be politically



aware – they will vote one day”. They reflected the view that “we need to prepare students for the future and educate them about the political system we live within”.

These comments reflect a *thin* understanding of democracy that centres on the individual. They discuss the primacy of values – not actual participative action – because it is “important to provide a direction and answer to the students and where their values lay on matters that effects them (...) values are very important”. Another PST stated: “Democracy is a very important concept, and if we nurture those values in our students we can continue a legacy of freedom and the fight for equality”; “(The fact that) teachers are capable of manufacturing or nurturing any value in students is definitely important as students need to understand what happens regarding a democracy”. Others referred back to their definition of democracy and related it to freedom of speech (but not necessarily to action), asserting that “it is very important for students to understand that their opinions count”.

20% of PSTs understood democracy more *thickly* and tendered such comments as “Educating students to be concerned, involved and contributing citizens of our country” is very important because it allows them “to critique and question and write letters to politicians (...)”. One PST added that what is actually important is for teachers to learn that “students have the power and intellect to mould their own lives”. Another added that:

If kids start learning early that their voice is important, that their opinion matters and can make a difference, there is more chance that they will be engaged and care about what is happening around them, and this can only create better, more active people and citizens for the future.

DISCUSSION: A NEO-LIBERAL AGENDA – RHETORIC OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION: LEARNING ABOUT BUT NOT FOR DEMOCRACY

How are we to understand and contextualise the contrasting and sometimes contradictory views presented here? Print (2007) argues that the challenge to democracy is not from an external or internal enemy but from its own citizens “who have grown distrustful of politicians, sceptical about democratic

institutions and disillusioned about how the democratic process functions” (p. 325). However, he points to the paradox of over 20 years of CCE, stating that “as the demand for democratic citizenship grows, youth participation in formal democracy is declining” (p. 326). He reiterates the importance of “learning about participation (...) developing of political engagement (...) to learn about democracy, government and citizenship (...) to acquire civic knowledge, and skills and values” (p. 336). He concludes that this may “enhance political knowledge and probably political engagement” (p. 336) (...) [and] “can influence engagement and participation” (p. 337) in the future. Criticising “participatory pedagogy” (p. 338) as weak in schools, Print explains that “engaged or conversational pedagogy” epitomized by “class voting, group inquiry, simulations, fieldwork and co-operative learning” has a strong correlation with future civic engagement. However, I would contend that this pedagogy may only reinforce the *illusion* of democracy.

What emerges from the PSTs surveyed is that too many believe that children are required to learn *about* democracy but not – at least in a serious way – *do* democracy. Missing from their comments was a thorough understanding of what a good citizen is. The civics versus citizenship debate can be seen in terms of the struggle between *thin* and *thick* democracy. Giroux (2000) suggests that because there has been a shift from creating a democracy of citizens to producing a democracy of consumers:

Public education becomes a venue for making a profit, delivering a product, or constructing consuming subjects, education reneges on its responsibilities for creating a democracy of citizens by shifting its focus to producing a democracy of consumers (p. 173).

Producing better curriculum materials will not in itself deliver the expected or intended results. Prior (2006) concludes that of stand-alone, unlinked or de-contextualised, one-off programmes do not provide the lasting effects planned for. Schools are accused by students of “talking the talk but not walking the walk” because teachers are not able to model good citizenship in their practices. Seddon concludes that:

Contemporary education policy, practice and politics have become primarily framed within a dominant economic discourse which marginalises and obscures the political purposes of education necessary to the formation and



sustainability of a democratic citizenry. The challenge is to re-acknowledge the crucial contribution of political education outcomes in sustaining democracy and to work for a pattern of citizen learning that accommodates necessary learning for work and life-with-risk, and also learning for citizen action that can imagine the democratic ideal, support ethical judgement and protect democratic decision-making (2004, p. 172).

This analysis raises concerns that much of the contemporary CCE may actually “pose a significant threat to Australian democracy” (Reid & Thomson, 2003, p. xi). How then can CCE be “remade to serve the purposes of a just and democratic society” (Seddon, 2004)? Countering this requires what she calls a *deliberatively thick* democracy which “assumes ethical and informed citizens who participate as equals in the public sphere” (Seddon, 2004, p. 171).

Thick democracy goes beyond the championing of electoral and legislative processes, the rule of law and basic civil rights (Howard & Patten, 2006). It encourages and facilitates the legitimacy of collective citizen and civil action as external to government and business. *Thick* democracy envisages a ‘social citizen’ – an individual always in relationship with others – capable of reflexive agency (Giddens, 1994). Paradoxically, many of the democracy-exporting countries are those experiencing crises of democracy at home¹⁰.

In contrast, the active citizen of neo-liberalism is conceived as an entrepreneur and a ‘*can do achiever*’ who largely benefits the individual. While schools are expected to prepare students to live in diverse democratic societies (Furman & Shields, 2005), the views of many of the PSTs in this research indicate that their school practices will not go far in fostering democracy or democratic practice.

Thick democracy must be about “voice, agency, inclusiveness and collective problem solving” that is “rooted in the capacity to see oneself reflected in the cultures of society” (Howard & Patten, 2006, pp. 462-463), and not just in the freedom to pursue one’s own individual self-interest.

Howard and Patten (2006) explain that, despite the common rhetoric of active citizenship, there are two perceptible trends within the new civics: the *thin* neo-liberal and the *thick(er)* radical democratic trends. They suggest that the latter is motivated by egalitarian commitments and “the desire to extend democracy while enhancing the political agency of once marginalised

10 The massive youth led-unrest of 2011 Occupy Movements is an example of this phenomenon.

citizens” (p. 459). Being active in this sense means being “socially engaged and committed to collective problem solving at all levels of the political community” (Howard & Patten, 2006, p. 460). Democracy, then, should be more than elections, and includes all power-structured social relationships. In essence, they explain that this requires the ability to “navigate and influence the power-structured social relations that characterize the politics of civil society” (Howard & Patten, 2006, p. 460). It would, therefore, be advantageous for educators to acknowledge that what students need to experience is an equalisation of agency; otherwise, democracy may not be possible.

Thick democracy actively challenges the view that “unregulated markets are by definition realms of freedom that produce equality of opportunity” with “extensive social and cultural citizenship rights” (Howard & Patten, 2006, p. 461). These in turn are linked to politicized empowerment in the social processes that shape society, where all are visible and heard despite their social status. *Thick* democracy must be about “voice, agency, inclusiveness and collective problem solving”. That is, it must be “rooted in the capacity to see oneself reflected in the cultures of society” (Howard & Patten, 2006, pp. 462-463), and not in the freedom to pursue one’s own individual self-interest. Therefore, *thick* democratic teaching should centre on cognitive, not just redistributive, social justice (Gale & Densmore, 2003). A *thick* democratic teaching that incorporates both the *participatory* and *justice orientated citizen* is implicit in Westheimer and Kahne’s vision, which goes beyond the *personally responsible citizen* of the ‘critical democracy’¹¹ posited by DeJaeghere and Tudball (2007) to incorporate both the *participatory* and *justice orientated citizen*.

Nevertheless, Westheimer and Kahne warn that:

While pursuit of both goals may well support development of a more democratic society, it is not clear whether making advances along one dimension will necessarily further progress on the other. Do programs that support civic participation necessarily promote students’ capacities for critical analysis and social change? Conversely, does focusing on social justice provide the foundation for effective and committed civic actors? Or might such programs support the development of armchair activists who have articu-

11 This is a distortion of Westheimer and Kahne’s thesis which makes it clear that, without real action and involvement, there can be no thick democracy.



late conversations over coffee, without ever acting? (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a, pp. 242-243).

Thick democracy will not be easily achieved by society in general or by schools in particular. As the agents of society in which they exist, teachers can rightly claim that they are restricted in what they alone can achieve, since national agendas and budgets are nationally and state controlled.

The challenge for us as teacher educators, teachers and education students is to ask questions of, rather than summarily accept, neo-liberal received wisdom. For Armstrong (2006), the definition of teaching as the uncritical transmission of knowledge begs the question of “what and how knowledge is constituted as a social and political stance towards the truth” (Armstrong, 2006, p. 10).

Armstrong argues that as participation and dissent are central to democratic life, they too should be central to school systems which, in turn, are fundamental to the contestation between a *thin* or *thick* democracy. For teachers:

These possibilities are revealed through dialogue with our students and in dialogues with the communities of policy and practice with whom we work. We cannot simply be concerned with the accumulation and transmission of knowledge and competencies; it is our duty to interrogate what is meant by knowledge and how it is formed and to understand the limits of competency. As educators we are engaged in a process of human inquiry that makes us human (Armstrong, 2006, p. 10).

But can this be done without “education *in* and *for* democracy” (Dobozy, 2007, p. 116)? Students cannot acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills to successfully become agents of citizenship without the simultaneous democratization of pedagogy, the schools and the school system itself. The democratic role-playing characteristic of pretend parliaments – recommended in the CCE and supported by the majority of respondents – means too often that students are involved in decision making on “an abstract and often detached level” (Dobozy, 2007). Programs associated with a *thin* democracy are unable to take the “social organisation of specific schools and the everyday life of individual students into consideration” (p. 118). The responses detailed here indicate that to “inspire political empowerment”, a change in education-

al practice at all levels involving more than off-the-shelf products or programmes is required.

CONCLUSION

Civics-related knowledge is necessary but not sufficient to prepare a student to become a “competent, democratic citizen” (Schwille & Amadeo, 2002). *Thick* democracy, however, has the potential of becoming an important medium in the struggle for social justice and equity, that does not necessarily involve assimilationism (Taylor, 1996).

Teachers have the choice of promoting and doing *thicker* democracy that is reflective, critical, participatory, tolerant and non-hierarchical or choosing a *thinner*, authoritarian democracy that is based on uncritical knowledge, standards and competencies that serve to measure of the ‘good citizen’. A *thick* democracy focuses on “how citizens understand themselves as members of a public with an obligation to promote the public good” (Howard & Patten, 2006, p. 472) and the competencies required of civic citizenship that encompass informed and active citizens participating in political debate and action on equal terms (Reid, 2002). Education needs to assume a “deep democratic engagement” (Reid, 2005, p. 292). The top-down imposition of policies designed by ‘teams of experts’ is incompatible with *thick* democracy and must be rejected if we aspire to the true ideals of democracy, in favour of the active involvement of the least powerful (Reid, 2002).

There have been detailed studies of school students’ attitudes to democratic values and participation in society that conclude that, while Australian students have a well-developed set of democratic values (Walsh & Black, 2011), they adopt a passive rather than an active style of engaging in conventional citizenship activities. There has not been any commensurate study on pre-service teachers.

No claim is being made that the views expressed by these participants are anything more than personal views or that they should be seen as generalizable to the broader population. In this current research the empirical and qualitative data analysed suggest that practicing educators have a *thin* conception of democracy and that if they are typical of our current teachers, it raises many concerns for and about the *health* of democracy in Australia. It also raises issues regarding the *stickability* of teacher education programs



and the acknowledged pressures and influences veteran teachers put on new teachers to adopt accepted practices.

On-going research will foster the development of framework for conceptualizing democracy in education, highlighting, in particular, what educators can do to become more critically aware and engaged in democracy within their teaching. But it will also enable us to better understand any correspondence between teacher's cultural and social capital and their perceptions and beliefs.

Further research will provide insight for the broader educational community and serve to expand knowledge in education, instead of education reproducing the current *thin democracy* that leads to disengaged citizens (Dejaeghere & Tudball, 2007). However, examples of excellent teacher practice will enable the development of an educational framework of teaching for *thick democracy*, which leads to a more participatory, empowered and engaged citizenry and a more inclusive participation in, and therefore safeguarding of, democratic society.

Schooling can and does contribute to the production of citizens' identities. However, its contribution cannot be controlled or measured in the same way as we measure how much math or literacy a student has learned in a given year. Citizenship education programs suggest that a "new identity will emerge" but that the endeavour is "always an educationally unfinished project, an unsolvable tension, that cannot be learned and understood through conscious rationality alone and thus not solved through the delivery of explicit instruction on what democracy is and how a good citizen should act" (Fischman & Haas, 2012, p. 174).

Education, including citizenship education within schools, cannot supersede the experiences students have had throughout the course of their lives. Yet school experiences often challenge "the notion of self and identities of large groups of students especially among minorities and those such as refugees, stateless migrants, and others who do not easily fit the traditional definitions of citizens within the nation-state" (Fischman & Haas, 2012, p. 177). A more holistic and dynamic approach that is pedagogical, experiential, political, social, economic and cultural is needed if we are to attain a more decent society and produce citizens who are engaged, critical, and productive agents of positive change.

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**EDUCATION, WORK, AND CITIZENSHIP OF YOUTH IN CHINA:
STRATEGIES, ACHIEVEMENTS, AND CHALLENGES**

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ABSTRACT

This article examines China's strategies for and constraints on protecting and implementing children's and young people's rights to education, employment and social and political participation. It shows that the 1978 policy of reform and opening to the world brought forth significant domestic economic and social changes and exposed China and its people to the world. All this, in turn, created new demands and concerns for the development of youth education, work and citizenship. The article further shows that in China, these three domains of youth have been influenced by changing domestic and global contexts, and the state has played a vital role in facilitating these changes in three major spheres of youth. China, however, has also been confronted with equity issues arising from new developments in these domains.

KEY WORDS

Youth; Education; Work; Citizenship; China.



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Education, Work, and Citizenship of Youth in China: Strategies, Achievements, and Challenges¹

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INTRODUCTION

Providing youth with an education that improves their life, transitions them to economic productivity, and prepares them to become active, functioning citizens is a longstanding international concern. The People's Republic of China (PRC), founded by the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 1949, is no exception. The article examines China's strategies for and constraints on protecting and implementing children's and young people's rights to education, employment and social and political participation. It argues that since the 1980s, China has played an important role in developing and improving these three domains in response to changing domestic and global contexts. It has also been confronted with equity issues arising from new developments in these domains.

After introducing the background of the PRC, this article discusses the challenges confronting and protection of young people's right to education. Then, it examines China's shift from a centrally planned to a market oriented labour market, its adoption of international labour norms, its strategies for easing youth unemployment and the problems arising from these

¹ The authors express their gratitude to Mr. Liu Tao for his research assistance to this project on youth in China.



strategies. Thirdly, it investigates the PRC's strategies for engaging children and young people in CPC-organized social and political activities in schools and workplaces, and the tension between their participating in a political space constrained by structural inequalities against non-CPC members and participating in a social space broadened by the emergence of civil society and expansion of cyberspace.

THE GENERAL CONTEXT OF EDUCATION, WORK AND CITIZENSHIP FOR CHINESE YOUTHS

Like many countries, the PRC has no commonly agreed-on age ranges for youth (*qingnian*) and young people (*qingshaonian ren*) (Mo, 2009). One Chinese dictionary defines youth as the 15-30 age cohort, while the age range for China's Top 10 Outstanding Youths competition is 18-39 (Y. K. Hu, Zheng, Chen & Wang, 2011). The CPC, which has ruled China since 1949, admits youngsters (*shaonian*) to the China Young Pioneers (CYP) and youths to the China Communist Youth League (CCYL) between 6 and 14, and between 14 and 28, respectively (China Communist Youth League National Congress, 2008; China Young Pioneers National Congress, 2005). For comparison purposes, this article adopts the United Nations' (2001) definition of youth as the 15-24 age cohort; it is difficult, however, to strictly adhere to this definition when discussing basic education and employment, as both could involve people outside this age range. The terms, youth and young people, are used interchangeably herein.

The PRC has the largest population in the world, some 1.34 billion people in 2010, the majority of whom (91.5%) are ethnic Han, with 55 other ethnicities accounting for the balance (8.5%) (Population Census Office under the State Council & National Bureau of Statistics, 2011a). The age cohorts 0-14 and 15-24 were over 221 million (16.6% of total population) and 227 million (17.1%), respectively; in other words, each cohort was about three-quarters of the US population. Since 1949, the CPC has dominated China's governance from the state to the village level. Diplomatically, China's foreign relations were mainly limited to other socialist states during the Mao period (1949-76), but were extended to include capitalist countries thereafter. This diversification has exposed the PRC more to the international community and to international norms and practices in various domains, including education and work.



In 1978, the PRC introduced a policy of reform and opening to the world, adopting five major strategies to revive its declining socialist economy (Law, 2011). First, it accessed and utilized foreign (particularly Western) capital, knowledge and technology. Second, it changed its economy to socialist market orientation by allowing the coexistence of central planning and market forces and, therefore, of the state and private sectors. Third, it adopted a differential approach to development, letting some areas (such as coastal areas and special economic zones) and people to get rich first. Fourth, the PRC gradually shifted its economic focus from primary to tertiary industries. Primary, secondary, and tertiary industries accounted for 28.2%, 47.9%, and 23.9% of GDP, respectively, in 1978, and for 10.0%, 46.6%, and 43.4% in 2011 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012b). Fifth, China increased the pace of urbanization, with urban populations rising from 21% in 1982, to 26.4% in 1990 and 49.7% in 2010 (Population Census Office under the State Council & National Bureau of Statistics, 2011b).

As a result, the PRC became the world's second largest economy (after the US) in 2010, and its *per capita* GDP rose over 90 fold, from RMB381 in 1978 to RMB35,083 in 2011 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012a). At the same time, however, the income gap between rich and poor has grown, as have such developmental problems as economic disparity between and within regions, inflation, rural to urban domestic migration, pollution, and social unrest and conflict.

EDUCATION

The PRC has the largest education system in the world, including pre-school programmes (for children under 6), nine-year compulsory basic education for all (EFA) (primary and junior secondary education for children 6-14), senior secondary (regular and vocational/technical) education (ages 15-17), and higher education. In 2011-12, it had over 254 million students: about 34 million in 166,800 pre-schools; 99 million in 241,200 primary schools; 51 million in 54,100 junior-secondary schools; 47 million in 27,600 senior-secondary schools; 398,700 in 1,767 special schools; and 23 million in 2,409 higher-education institutes (Ministry of Education, 2012a). Since the 1980s, China has attached higher importance to education and to protecting the rights of children and young people to education through legislation, nine-year compulsory EFA, and



expanded post-EFA education. These efforts, however, could not completely eradicate structural inequalities and social discrimination, as reflected in widening intra- and extra-regional educational disparities, and in children of rural-to-urban domestic migrants being deprived of their educational rights.

MEASURES TO PROTECT CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S RIGHTS TO EDUCATION

The PRC's national leaders have seen education as an important means to improve the quality of China's labour force and its national strength in an increasingly competitive world. In 1949, nearly 80% of China's population was illiterate, representing a huge barrier to national development and modernization. After its 1978 opening to the world, China sought to turn its huge population into a national asset and stressed the need to gear education towards modernization, the world and the future. In 1995, the PRC emphasized the role of education and science in national prosperity (*kejiao xingguo*). Despite its instrumentalist approach, China has taken serious steps, including legislation and the expansion of education, to protect children's and youths' rights to education.

China used legislation to protect its citizens' right to education and to commit itself to providing education at different levels. It followed the spirit of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* regarding everyone's right to education, including free and compulsory education at elementary and fundamental levels, and various forms of post-compulsory education (United Nations, 1948, Article 26). Specifically, the National People's Congress (NPC, China's highest law-making body), in revising China's Constitution in 1982, stipulated that Chinese citizens have the duty and right to receive an education, whereas the state has the obligation to wipe out illiteracy, run schools of various types, provide compulsory primary education, and develop post-compulsory (secondary, vocational, and post-secondary) education (National People's Congress, 2004, Articles 19 and 46). In 1986, the NPC codified the principle of equal educational opportunity, stipulating that all children over the age of six should receive compulsory EFA, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, race or physical condition (Articles 5 and 9). A decade later, the NPC (1996) passed the Vocational Education Law, recognizing the strategic importance of vocational education to labour, employment and economic and social development in China, ensuring citizens' right to vocational edu-



cation, and requiring the state to develop, reform and support vocational education, including in rural, remote and poverty-stricken areas (Articles 3, 5, and 7); in the Higher Education Law (1998), it stipulated that all citizens enjoy the right to higher education (Article 1). This law requires the state to help ethnic minorities and financially-disadvantaged students receive a higher education, and universities and colleges to admit disabled students who meet admission standards.

To extend the right of children and youths to education, China adopted a differential approach to educational development, expanding different levels of education at different stages. In the mid-1980s, China began pursuing EFA, because this could improve the quality of Chinese workers at the lowest and largest labour market stratum. In addition, China used two popularization strategies: regionalization by setting different goals and timelines for eastern/coastal, middle and western parts of the country; and devolution of major administrative and financial responsibilities to local governments. As a result, China achieved universal primary education in 2010, increasing net enrolment rates from 93% in 1980 to 99.1% (China Education Yearbook Editorial Team, 2011); that same year, it achieved universal junior secondary education, raising gross enrolment rates to 100%, up from 66.7% in 1990. In 2012, the overall EFA retention rate was 92% (Y. Liu, 2013). In other words, China instituted EFA ahead of the United Nations' millennium goal of all children able to complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015 (World Bank, 2002); moreover, it extended EFA to include junior secondary schooling, three years more than the UN called for.

In addition, China moved to equip youths to fill the middle and upper strata of the labour market by expanding post-EFA education – senior secondary and higher education – in the early and late 1990s, respectively. The number of new senior secondary students drastically increased from 4.8 million in 1990 to 8.1 million in 2000 and 15.9 million in 2010; higher education (including degree- and sub-degree programmes) enrolments rose from 0.6 million (7.2% of age cohort) in 1995 to 2.2 million (12.5%) in 2000 and 6.6 million (26.5%) in 2010 (Ministry of Education, 2011). According to Trow's (1970) criteria, Chinese higher education has shifted from an elitist orientation (enrolling below 15% of age cohort) to massification (15-50%). Senior secondary and higher education will further expand due to China's decision to increase gross admission rates to 90% and 40%, respectively, by 2020 (Communist Party of China Central Committee & State Council, 2010).



China's remarkable achievement in EFA, however, does not mean it has no dropout problem. In the 2000s, junior secondary dropout rates rose, particularly in some poor rural areas (Yi et al., 2012). Research shows three main types of dropout students: students with serious learning difficulties; students from extremely poor families, and students left behind in rural areas by parents who migrated to urban areas for work (L. Q. Li, 2013). As such, the central government asked local governments to increase EFA retention rates to 95% of age cohort by 2020, up from 91% in 2009 (Communist Party of China Central Committee & State Council, 2010).

Competition for higher education spaces remains acute, however. According to the UN Development Programme's (2013) Human Development Report, recent higher education enrolment rates in China are lower (25.9% of age cohort) than in the West (e.g., 94.8% in the United States, 58.5% in the United Kingdom) and in Asia and the Pacific (e.g., 75.9% in Australia, 59% in Japan). The same report ranked China 101st in human development among the UN member states.

EQUITY ISSUES CONFRONTING EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Chinese children and youths face issues at various levels, including widening regional education disparities and the marginalization in EFA and post-EFA of non-local children whose parents' household is registered elsewhere in China.

1. *Widening of Educational Disparities in EFA Between and Within Regions*

Since the implementation of EFA in the late 1990s, the focus of children's right to education has shifted from equal access to education to equity in education standards. The widening of intra- and extra-regional educational disparities, in terms of per student expenditures, teacher-student ratio, teacher qualifications and school conditions and facilities, (Project Team of a Case Study on Key Educational Policy in Transitional China, 2005) disadvantages students from poor areas or poor families, and is a matter of national concern.

This inequity can be interpreted as resulting from three main, inter-related problems. First, low public education expenditures; despite having promised to do so since the early 1990s, China did not raise public educa-

tion expenditure until 2012, and then only to 4% of GDP (about 20% of state expenditures) (Y. Liu, 2013) – on par with lower-middle income countries, but below the world average of 4.6% (World Bank, 2012). Second, uneven distribution of school financial resources, due to local governments' difficulties in generating revenue, particularly taxes, in different areas because of China's differential approach to economic development. Third, fee abuse; to augment low government subsidy rates, many schools asked parents to pay illegal sponsorship fees (based on school reputation) to ensure a school place, admitted students to elite classes with better teachers if their parents were willing to pay more, and charged for tutorial or supplementary lessons after school or during holidays (Law & Pan, 2009). As a result, inter- and intra-school disparities within and between regions widened, as did inequities in standards of education and student participation (Project Team of a Case Study on Key Educational Policy in Transitional China, 2005).

To address these equity issues, China introduced, in 2001, its “two exemptions and one subsidy” (*liangmian yibu*) policy, requiring the central government to buy the textbooks for students from poor families, exempting them from miscellaneous local fees and subsidizing their boarding expenses. In addition, the NPC (2006) revised the Compulsory Education Law, forbidding schools from levying miscellaneous fees or charging for tutorials, and asking central and provincial governments to take additional financial responsibility for EFA to ease financial burdens at the county or local levels. In the late 2000s, these two measures (among others), seemed to slow, slightly, the growth of educational disparities in four provinces (Shandong, Henan, Shaanxi and Gansu) (Zhai & Sun, 2012). Moreover, in the early 2010s, China piloted a nutrition scheme for 30 million students in 481 poor and 699 extremely poor counties, to improve the health of students in rural areas (Y. Liu, 2013). Despite these efforts, intra- and extra-regional disparities between schools remain a serious national concern, and the CPC Central Committee and State Council (2010) have called on central and local governments to reduce them significantly by 2020.

2. *Marginalization of Domestic Migrant Students' Rights to Local Public Education*

In the mid-1990s, the rights of domestic migrant students, whose parents' registered domicile was elsewhere in China, to EFA and post-EFA in host areas began to become a serious social concern, revealing an important gap in China's efforts to ensure people's rights to education. Although the



rights of migrant children and young people to EFA and post-EFA education are protected by national laws, the realization of these rights in host areas is localized, and constrained by national household registration policy and related measures.

Since the beginning of economic reform in the 1980s, the unequal national pace of modernization and urbanization has resulted in surplus rural labour and a wave of economically-driven domestic migration. In 2011, there were 230 million domestic migrants, about one-sixth of China's population (National Health and Family Planning Commission, 2012). Commonly, after settling in host areas, single migrant workers marry and have children, while some married migrant workers bring their children with them. Thus, the population of migrant children aged below 18 rose drastically, from 19.8 million in 2000 to 38 million in 2010 (Hua, 2007; Wu, 2012).

In the 1990s and early 2000s, migrant children were deprived of equal access to EFA in host areas, despite their parents' important economic contributions to those areas. Household registration regulations (National People's Congress Standing Committee, 1958) tie people's rights to political election, public education, and social welfare and public housing to their domicile registration; domestic migrants cannot exercise those rights unless they return to their original domicile. The policy also assigns local governments the administrative and financial responsibility for providing these rights to citizens whose registered domicile is in their jurisdiction.

The policy caused serious education problems for both migrant children and local governments in host areas. Public schools were very reluctant to enrol migrant students due to the lack of subsidy from host and source area governments. To compensate, they often charged migrant students a "school-place rental fee" (*jiedu fei*), while some schools, particularly famous ones, asked migrant parents to pay a sponsorship and/or school selection fee – in Beijing in the early 2000s, the former came to about RMB480 per term, while the latter reached RMB20,000-30,000 (L. Wang, 2008). Most migrant parents could not afford these fees on a monthly household income of between RMB800 and RMB1,500.

Thus, many migrant parents preferred to send their children to illegal, private schools with lower fees. These schools began to flourish in the 1990s, growing, in Beijing, from one school in 1993 to 241 schools in 2006, and providing places for nearly one-third of migrant children (Wen, 2007). However, most migrant-children schools employed unqualified headmasters and

teachers, had serious hygiene and fire safety problems, and had sub-standard facilities (Kwong, 2004; Law & Pan, 2009).

Many migrant parents could not afford tuition fees even in these illegal schools and kept their children home; in 1997, 14% of Beijing's 80,000 migrant children aged 6-15 were not in school (China National Children's Centre, 2003). Moreover, migrant children were further disadvantaged by their family's comparatively limited financial resources (Hua, 2007). Many migrant parents had less time to focus on their children's studies and had difficulty helping with homework because they worked long work and were not well-educated. Moreover, they had no extra money to support extracurricular activities or hire private tutors for examination drills.

In 2003, the State Council introduced an administrative measure requiring host area governments to provide eligible migrant children with equal opportunity to nine-year EFA, later codified in the 2006 revised Basic Education Law (National People's Congress, 2006, Article 12). In response, many local governments gradually abolished illegal private migrant-student schools, transferring many of their pupils to public schools. In 2011-12, 12.6 million migrant children were enrolled in nine-year compulsory public education: 9.3 million in primary and 3.3 million in junior secondary (Ministry of Education, 2012a). China has promised to enroll at least 90% of eligible migrant children in EFA in their host areas (All-China Women's Federation, 2013); however, this means a large portion of migrant children still cannot enjoy EFA in public schools for various reasons.

In the early 2010s, the problem of migrant children education began to extend into public senior secondary and higher education, to which they were not entitled in host areas. To deal with this, in 2012, four ministries jointly issued a circular asking local governments to allow migrant workers to take public examinations for admission to post-compulsory education in host areas (Ministry of Education, National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Public Security, & Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, 2012); in 2013, one municipality (Chongqing) and 11 provinces (of 31 administrative areas) agreed to allow eligible migrant students to sit college entrance examinations, with another 11 provinces expected to follow suit in 2014 and three more in 2015. Some local governments, however, set non-academic eligibility criteria for examinations, such as evidence of their parents' stable occupation and residence, and buying social insurance (a state-run, comprehensive insurance plan covering areas such as health and unemployment).



Four administrative areas (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong and Tianjin) did not show a strong desire to open up their public university education to migrant students. These areas have famous national universities and the largest population of migrant workers and their children; in Shanghai, for example, migrants make up 42% of the local population (10 million). Beijing's migrant student admission criteria are the harshest of the four; beginning in 2014, migrant students will have access to tertiary vocational/technical institutes offering sub-degree programmes, but not to universities degree programs (Beijing Municipal Government, 2012). Underlying these responses is a subtle issue – how to ensure and balance the rights of local and migrant children and youth in highly-mobilized China. Stringent non-academic criteria likely reduce migrant students' admissibility and ability to compete equally with local students, whereas low non-academic criteria likely invite an influx of migrant students into local higher education to the disadvantage of local students.

EMPLOYMENT

Since the 1980s, economic reform in the PRC has changed the nature of the youth labour market from one that is centrally-planning to one that is market oriented, determined by supply and demand. This has led to new employer/employee relationships and problems, and has caused serious youth employment issues in urban and rural areas across the country. To tackle these new challenges, China has legislated employment rights for workers (including youths) in the emerging market economy, expanded post-EFA education to delay youths' entry into the labour market, and allowed rural youth (and adult) workers to look for jobs in urban areas. The implementation of these measures, however, revealed the inadequacy of legislation protecting workers' rights and created new employment problems, such as intensified job competition among post-EFA graduates and structural and social discrimination against youth migrant workers in the labour market and society.

SHIFT IN THE LABOUR MARKET FROM CENTRALLY- PLANNED TO MARKET-ORIENTED

Formerly, the Chinese state overwhelmingly controlled the means of production and allocation of resources, and was almost the country's sole employ-



er. Youth employment was not a major problem because after graduation, students were guaranteed jobs based on state needs and plans; in this way, youth unemployment was hidden. For example, during the Cultural Revolution (1967 – 1976), millions of urban youth were sent to work in the countryside as “a shortcut to solving employment pressure and possible youthful resistance” arising from the closure of schools and universities (Yan & Gao, 1996, p. 281).

When the market economy began to take root in the early 1990s and the state sector of the labour market contracted, youth employment in urban and rural areas became a serious national problem. Many urban state-owned enterprises and factories were downsized or even privatized and numerous state workers laid off, and the state stopped arranging jobs for school or college graduates (except those who had received professional scholarships or who had been specifically recruited by, for example, military universities). On the other hand, the private sector labour market bloomed and numerous private enterprises were established and became new employers. People, including school leavers or college graduates, were allowed to choose and compete for employers, and *vice versa*. This diversified and complicated employment relationships, and generated new relations and conflicts among the state, workers and employers in the labour market.

YOUTH'S EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR RIGHTS

Before the 1980s, the PRC enacted few specific labour rights laws; by the 1990s, however, youth and young adult employment and labour rights had begun to be recognized and protected through legislation. In 1983, the PRC began to be active in the International Labour Organization (ILO) and to increase its efforts to protect labour rights. In the 1990s, China began to change its role from labour market monopoliser to macro-regulator, using law to guide the transition from central planning to a market economy, and to address problems and issues arising during the transition. The NPC Standing Committee (1994) promulgated the Labour Law, covering all employers and employees, including youths, and incorporating important international labour standards.

Firstly, the PRC forbade child labour, adopting the ILO's (1973, 1999) conventions on child labour and minimum age. While the 1986 Compulsory Education Law ensured children's free access to EFA, the 1994 Labour Law



defined 16, the age of most EFA graduates, as the minimum employment age. The PRC also enacted special measures protecting the safety and health of employed minors, aged 16-18 (*wei chengnian gong*), through the Ministry of Labour's (1994) Regulations on Special Protection for Minor Workers; for example, minors have to obtain State Council approval before finding employment. Hazardous occupations such as mining were not allowed to employ minors, and employers are required to provide minor workers with pre-employment vocational training and occupational safety and health education, provide health checks before and after one year of employment, and adjust the amount and/or type of their work, if necessary.

Secondly, the PRC protected youth and adult labour rights by ratifying ILO (1951, 1958, 1981) conventions on pay equity, discrimination, and occupational safety and health. The 1994 Labour Law of China mandates workers' freedom to choose their occupation, equal opportunity for employment and promotion (regardless of ethnicity, gender or religion), pay equity, and occupational safety and health. Together with the 1992 Trade Unions Law (National People's Congress, 2001), it gives workers the freedom to join and organize trade unions. To protect employee health, the Labour Law limits work hours to not more than eight hours a day or 44 hours per week, and limits overtime to not more than one hour a day in normal circumstances, or three hours a day or 36 hours per month in special circumstances. The Labour Law also follows the spirit of the ILO's (1921) Weekly Rest Convention, stipulating that employees are legally entitled to weekly rest days and leave on public holidays, such as first day of a year, spring festivals, and National Day (1 October).

Thirdly, the PRC began to promote contracts to further govern relationships between employers and employees and regulate both parties' practices and behaviours. The 1994 Labour Law follows the spirit of the ILO's (1949) convention on contracts, and requires employer and employee to conclude a labour contract wherein a labour relationship is established. The legal status of contracts in the socialist market economy was reinforced by the enactment of the Labour Contract Law, which stipulates contract contents and process, the contractual rights and obligations of employers and employees, and the conditions and procedure for contract termination, including layoff (National People's Congress Standing Committee, 2007). It also highlights the importance of the law, fairness, equality, consent, integrity and trust in concluding a contract, forbids compulsory overtime, requires employers

to pay employees for overtime, and does not allow employers to dismiss employees who are pregnant or sick during their contract period. The law was later revised to prevent discrimination against “temporary workers”, stipulating equal remuneration for equal work by temporary and regular employees (National People’s Congress Standing Committee, 2012).

Despite these legal efforts, the PRC has been criticized as having poor record of protecting labour rights (Q. Yang, 2006). According to the ILO (2013), the PRC ratified 25 (of nearly 190) ILO conventions, with 22 in force, as of early 2013. Trade unions are required to uphold the CPC’s leadership and its policies (National People’s Congress, 2001, Article 4). Chinese workers have no right to strike or to collective bargaining, and may only join or organize trade unions that fall within the monopoly of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (Julie, 2010). Finally, penal forced labour still exists; for example, in 2009, about 190,000 inmates were interred in 320 labor camps (Yu, 2013).

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS

Youth employment is a thorny international issue, with the global youth unemployment rate rising from 11.9% in 2007 to 13% in 2009 (United Nations, 2010). It has also long been a pressing issue in the PRC; in the late 1970s and early 1980s, 20 million people in urban areas were unemployed (H. S. Li, 2008). Officially, unemployment among youths aged 16-24 dropped from 6.3% in 2000, to 3.7% in 2010 (Population Census Office under the State Council & National Bureau of Statistics, 2001, 2011a), falling below global averages. Some studies, however, suggest China’s actual youth unemployment rate could be higher – 35.3% of the urban 16-24 age cohort in 1997, and 9% of the 15-29 national age cohort in 2005 (S. L. Zhang, 2010). In addition to revitalizing local economies to create jobs, and allowing self-employment and private businesses, China used, in the 1990s, two main strategies to ease youth employment: expanding post-EFA education and allowing the large-scale domestic migration of youth labour, particularly those with junior or senior secondary education qualifications. These solutions, however, gave rise to new problems.

1. *Keen Competition of Post-EFA Graduates for Jobs in the High-end Labour Market*

The first strategy was to delay the entry of young people into the labour market by educating them for as long as possible; to that end, and also to



enhance Chinese workers' ability to compete globally, in the 1990s China expanded senior secondary and higher education. In 2011, this kept 15.9 million junior secondary graduates and 6.6 million senior secondary graduates in school for from three to seven additional years. The strategy, however, could only delay, not resolve, youth employment problems.

In the early 2000s, employment problems faced by highly qualified youths began to emerge in urban areas. The expansion of post-EFA education had intensified employment competition among graduates, as there were fewer new jobs created in the high-end labour market than there were post-EFA graduates. In the 1990s, there were 7.5 million degree- and sub-degree graduates, equalling about 10% of the 76 million new jobs created in the same period; in the 2000s, although the number of new jobs nearly doubled, to 130 million, the number of graduates more than quadrupled, increasing labour market competition (R. W. Hu, Zhang & Zhu, 2013). Graduates from the Humanities (including Arts, History, Philosophy, Law and Education) are less likely to get jobs, as China's economic reform and urbanization has created a greater demand for Business Administration, Engineering and Science graduates. Moreover, due in part to lower unit training costs, the number of Humanities graduates increased five-fold from 2002 to 2010, compared to a three-fold increase among non-Humanities graduates; the labour market could not accommodate the glut (C. M. Zhang, 2013).

Second, post-EFA graduates often take jobs that do not reflect their aspirations. Many plan to work in first-tier cities like Beijing or Shanghai, but have to choose between taking white-collar employment elsewhere or blue-collar work in the big cities. Between 1990 and 2010, the number of workers with senior secondary or college qualifications in white-collar occupations grew from 11 million to 52 million, while those in blue-collar occupations rose from just over 1 million to 23.5 million (R. W. Hu et al., 2013).

Third, graduation does not guarantee employment; statistics say 21.8% of graduates in 2010 were unemployed, up from 20.4% of graduates in 2001 (National Bureau of Statistics & Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, 2011). In 2002, 44% of unemployed graduates had college qualifications and 26% had senior secondary qualifications (S. L. Zhang, 2010); these unemployed graduates are not covered by social security (S. L. Zhang, 2010), and many are a financial burden on their family.

The 1990s expansion of EFA education helped the PRC increase the quantity and quality of workers for the high-end labour market, and temporarily

ease youth employment problems. This stopgap strategy, however, cannot resolve long-term employment problems facing youths when they finally enter the labour market. Indeed, educational expansion has led to new youth unemployment problems and reflects the failure of manpower planning in China to link educational expansion to labour market needs. In developed or developing countries, lack of opportunities for employment and social mobility can foster youth dissatisfaction and social unrest (World Economic Forum, 2012). To avoid this, Chinese authorities need to be increasingly sensitive to changing labour market needs, review its policy and planning in education and manpower, and adjust the supply of post-EFA graduates and create jobs for them.

2. *Large-scale Domestic Migration of Labour Force in the Low-end Labour Market*

China's second strategy to ease employment problems, since the 1980s, has involved allowing surplus labour, particularly in rural areas, to move to urban or more developed areas between and within provinces, despite the household registration policy. This has led to an unprecedented, large-scale domestic migration of workers and significantly increased youths' geographical mobility and employment opportunities in the national low-end labour market, particularly for those with primary or secondary education qualifications. However, they still face unequal treatment and discrimination in the labour market and society.

The domestic migration population is marked by three major features. First, its growth is rapid and substantial, expanding from 70 million in 1993, to 144 million in 2000 and 230 million in 2011 (National Health and Family Planning Commission, 2012). Youths account for a significant portion of the migrant population; about 30% were aged 15-24 in 2000, and 45% aged below 30 in 2010 (Gao, Cui & Chen, 2011). Second, geographically, about 80% domestic migration in 2011 flowed from rural to urban areas within and between provinces, and from western and middle regions (Anhui, Henan, and Hunan) to coastal regions (Guangdong, Zhejiang, Shanghai, Beijing, Jiangsu, and Fujian). Third, migrant workers often move from the primary sector (e.g., agriculture and fisheries) to secondary and tertiary sectors (e.g., unskilled workers, technical workers, and the service industry) (Song, 2010).

Between the 1980s and 2000s, there were major changes in the young migrant worker population, creating what some scholars (e.g., C. G. Wang, 2001) refer to as two generations. The first generation included those who



became migrant workers from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s. A majority of these had received primary education at best, no vocational training, and were separated from their parents, who stayed in their rural areas. The second generation became migrant workers after the mid-1990s and were better educated, because EFA had been a fact in China since 1986. For example, in 2012, 18.3% of the 6.2 million migrant workers in Chongqing Municipality had primary education, compared to 56.3% with junior secondary and 25.4% with senior secondary (Z. Q. Liu, 2013). Although their households were registered in rural areas, a significant portion of second-generation migrant workers were born, raised and lived in urban areas. Compared to their parents, they have more ability and opportunity for development, but are less hardworking and persevering (Zhu, 2010).

Despite their contribution to the economy of host areas and China as a whole, migrant workers face unequal treatment and discrimination that prevents them from integration into local communities. In the labour market, many migrant workers take jobs locals are reluctant to do, and receive lower pay than their local counterparts for the same type and amount of work. Many migrant workers often are forced to work long hours and have less job security. In 2011, the average migrant worked 54.6 hours per week (above the legal limit of 44 hours) and over 30% did not have an employment contract as required by law (National Health and Family Planning Commission, 2012). Migrant workers' employment rights are further reduced by their weak bargaining power, the fact that the supply of migrant labour exceeds market demands, weak enactment and enforcement of laws protect migrant employees, low awareness among migrant workers of their legal rights, insufficient legal aid, and a lack of NGOs to help workers fight for their rights (Song, 2010).

Many youth and adult migrant workers face social discrimination as well as employment barriers, and are largely marginalized in Chinese society (Murphy & Fong, 2006). First, because of the household registration policy, migrant workers (and their children) are not entitled to the same rights and benefits as local citizens. Second, migrant workers are often discriminated against for their accents, life styles and habits, which differ from local people's. Third, migrant workers often do not have a strong sense of belonging to their host areas; in 2011, 35% of migrant workers had not attended any social activities and fewer than 10% participated in elections or local competitions (National Health and Family Planning Commission, 2012). Psychologically, many migrant workers, particularly younger ones, are not happy because of poor work-

ing and living conditions, declining real income, and a dichotomy between their expected and actual career achievements (Knight & Gunatilaka, 2010). To many migrant workers, their host areas are mainly places for earning a living, rather than pursuing social commitment and integration.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

In addition to education and the labour market, China's policy of reform and opening to the world brought significant changes to Chinese youths' political and social participation. Before the 1980s, youth social and political participation was often politically-driven, as when Mao Zedong turned over 10 million high school and college students into militant Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976) (Clark, 2012). After the 1970s, China continued to recruit and engage children and youths in CPC activities in schools and workplaces nationwide. The space for youth political participation is still constrained by structural inequalities that favour those with CPC membership, but the potential for youth social participation has been broadened by the emergence of civil society and the dramatic expansion of cyberspace.

ENGAGEMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE CPC'S POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

To consolidate its leadership, the Chinese state has long engaged children and youth in social and political activities arranged by the CYP and CCYL, which penetrate campuses and workplaces, targeting different groups for similar political purposes – to reinforce their members' affiliation and identification with the CPC.

The CYP focuses on student work in primary and junior secondary schools. According to its constitution, the CYP is led by the CCYL; it is the “school” in which children aged 6-14 (i.e., grade 1-9 students) learn about communism and are prepared to become “builders of socialist undertakings” (China Young Pioneers National Congress, 2005). In their swearing-in ceremony, CYP members are required to pledge their love and support for the CPC. They are entitled to wearing the CYP's red league scarf; almost all students wear this scarf. In CYP formal activities on campus, student members are required to sing their anthem *We are the Successors of Communism* and be “al-



ways ready” to strive for communist undertakings when asked. The CYP also organizes social activities in which children participate in local community services, donate books and stationery, or offer environmental protection. To strengthen the CYP’s work on campus, in September, 2012, the Ministry of Education (2012b) made CYP activities state-mandated, compulsory activities in grades 1-8, requiring schools to arrange class time for CYP lessons.

Unlike the CYP, the CCYL targets young people in senior secondary schools, universities and the workplace. According to its constitution, the CCYL is the CPC’s “assistant and reserve force” and its “advanced youth group organization”. It recruits members between the ages of 14 and 28. From 2002 to 2012, CCYL membership increased by about 30%, from 69.9 million to 89.9 million (L. H. Li, 2013); in 2012, the CCYL had a larger membership than the CPC (85.1 million). The CCYL is very penetrative in society; in 2008, CCYL members accounted for 26% (78.6 million) of the youth population (Y. J. Li, 2009). More than half (51%) were senior secondary or higher education students, 27% were farmers and primary industry workers, 7% were secondary industry workers, and 15% were tertiary workers or from other industries. Similar to their CYP counterparts, CCYL members need to pledge love and support for the CPC. Their major duties include: studying CPC-prescribed political theories, such as Marxism-Leninism and the theories of China’s national leaders; helping disseminate and implement the CPC’s party line and various policies; implementing CCYL decisions and policies; receiving national defence education; and helping other young people and reflecting their views and requests to the CPC.

Because of its political mission and special status in the CPC, the CCYL has been a cradle and training school for Chinese leaders and a strong political counterbalance to other CPC factions. Before assuming their provincial or state posts, many Chinese leaders and officials occupied important CCYL leadership posts, including Hu Yaobang (CPC General Secretary, 1982 – 1987), Hu Jintao (CPC General Secretary, 2002 – 2013; President of China, 2003 – 2013), and three of the five new cabinet members appointed to the State Council in March, 2013: Premier Li Keqiang, Vice-Premiers Liu Yandong and Wang Yang.

STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES CONFRONTING YOUTHS’ POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The PRC is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, but has not ratified it yet. On paper, Chinese youths are constitution-



ally entitled to freedom of religion, speech, publication, assembly, association, procession and demonstration (National People's Congress, 2004). Regardless of race, gender, religion or socioeconomic status, citizens aged 18 or above also have the constitutional right to vote and stand for election. Similar to their adult counterparts, Chinese youths, however, confront structural inequalities when participating in the existing political system, which favours individuals with CPC membership; party membership is important political capital among Chinese youths.

On the one hand, Chinese youths cannot form their own political parties without state approval. At its founding in 1949, the PRC officially recognized nine political parties: the CPC and eight others; since then, no new political parties have been allowed to form and, if they seek political affiliation, Chinese youths must join one of the recognized political parties. Moreover, political discussion, publication or gatherings deemed a challenge to the CPC's leadership is often suppressed, and political activists involved could be prosecuted and jailed for subverting state power and the socialist system. This limits the scope of Chinese youths' political activities to those acceptable to the CPC.

On the other hand, the differential treatment afforded the CPC and other political parties draws Chinese youths to the former. Firstly, the CPC is the largest political party in the PRC (and the world). Despite the global decline of socialism in the late 1980s and 1990s, CPC membership increased from about 28 million in 1973 to over 85.1 million (over 6% of China's population) in 2012 (Zhou, 2013), 25.6% of whom were aged 35 or younger. The CPC overwhelmingly outnumbers all non-CPC political parties, which had a total of fewer than 700,000 members in 2007 (State Council, 2007). Secondly, in the Chinese political structure, the CPC is positioned as the core of the leadership and the ruling party, while the others are "participating parties" (*canzheng dang*) that may "participate in and deliberate on state affairs" but still fall under the CPC's leadership (State Council, 2007).

Thirdly, CPC membership can be an important asset for young people pursuing a political career. Chinese citizens aged 18 or older may vote in direct elections of people's congresses at the village, township or district level; representatives to higher people's congresses are chosen through indirect election. The results of these elections are seldom a surprise; CPC members dominate people's congresses at all levels, and only CPC members (*i.e.*, about 6% of population) can hold top leadership positions, such as president, premier,



and chairperson of the NPC. Successful candidates for these three posts are first internally elected within the CPC, mainly through indirect elections at various levels, before being nominated to, and “endorsed” and appointed by, the NPC. In other words, existing Chinese political institutions and practices deprive members of other political parties and members without political affiliation any opportunity to become state leaders.

EXPANSION OF YOUTHS’ SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN CIVIL SOCIETY AND CYBERSPACE

Despite structural constraints on political participation, the public space for Chinese youths with or without CPC membership to discuss and participate in social and public affairs has grown in the PRC since the 1980s. This can be partly attributed to the impact of social changes, the emergence of civil society and the rapid expansion of cyberspace.

Firstly, Chinese youths are increasingly aware of their rights and freedoms. Compared to their parents, most Chinese youths are more educated due to the success of EFA and post-EFA education, and live in a more affluent and pluralist society. Because they grew up amidst economic and social changes arising from the 1978 policy of reform and opening to the world, many young people are more pragmatic and less idealistic; have a stronger sense of competition and awareness of their personal rights and freedoms; lead a more diversified lifestyle in terms of friends, job choices, and consumption behaviours; and tend to choose their personal development and social participation based on personal preferences (H. S. Li, 2008; X. Yang, 2012). This description is certainly not a full picture of Chinese youths, and one can expect a lot of variations between individual youths. It does, however, offer a rough overview of Chinese youths.

Secondly, the emergence of civil society as an autonomous sphere for public discourse and participation (McCormick, 1996) has provided new space in which Chinese youths may pursue their ideals, rights and freedoms. After China’s attitude towards civil society gradually changed from suppression to tolerance in the 1980s (Law, 2011), the number of officially recognized NGOs rose from 154,000, in 2000, to 462,000, in 2011 (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2001, 2012), in areas ranging from social services to environmental protection. In 2007, 34% of people who served and participated in NGOs were younger than 35 (Su, 2011). A survey shows that, through such participation, youths en-



hance their social awareness and participation, develop social resources and networks, and facilitate the growth of civil society (Su, 2011).

Moreover, youths can be a major source of volunteer services for local communities and international events (such as the 2008 Beijing Olympics and 2010 Shanghai World Exposition). They can also be a strong civic force striving for rights through demonstration. Although criticized for their lack of interest in politics (e.g., discussing political topics), many young people may suddenly gather together and participate in large-scale social demonstrations (He & Huang, 2011). It is not uncommon for Chinese youths to participate in protests against local government that attempt land grabs, or approve the construction of petrochemical plants that might cause local environment pollution.

Thirdly, the public space for Chinese youths' social discussion and participation has been broadened by the rapid expansion of cyberspace and of information and communication technologies (ICT). Since the first email was sent, in 1987, Internet and mobile-phone use in China has grown quickly. According to the China Internet Network Information Center (2013), the number of Chinese netizens increased from 111 million (8.5% of China's 2005 population) to 564 million (42.1%) in 2012, while the number of Internet-connected mobile phone users rose from 50 million (24% of netizens) in 2007 to 420 million (74.5%) in 2012. In 2012, nearly 50% of netizens were children or youths (24% aged 10-19 and 30.4% aged 20-29) and 25.1% were students. Netizen's top ten Internet usages were: instant messaging (83%); information search (80%); internet music (77%); blogs (66%); internet videos (66%); internet games (60%); microblogs (55%); social networking (49%); email (45%); and, internet shopping (43%). The PRC also had 309 million microblog accounts; 55% of microbloggers post using the Web, while 66% use internet-connected mobile phones (China Internet Network Information Center, 2013). Many Chinese youths use microblogs to express and communicate their views on important national and local issues, and to mobilize actions reflecting their concerns or dissatisfaction.

Fourthly, cyberspace can be an alternative platform in which many Chinese youths can practise direct election. Although they cannot directly choose their national leaders, youths can directly vote, with the help of ICT, for their favourite songs and popular music idols, as when the Chinese public selected Li Yuchun as the winner of the 2005 nationwide singing contest, Super Girls, modelled after American Idol. On the night of the finale, some eight million



SMS (short message service) votes were casted, with Li winning by more than 3.5 million votes (Jakes, 2005). In the same year, Li was named one of Asia's heroes in a special issue of *Times (Asia) Magazine*. Her success in the competition was attributed partly to her fans' continuous efforts to promote her singles and albums on the Internet, and casting 'spoiler votes' on webpages for different music charts (L. Yang, 2009). The contest was commended by Li (2008) for adopting important principles of democratic election: equal opportunity for participation and the adoption of an open, fair and just voting procedure. To some extent, election in a non-political arena serves as a good teaching example of democratic election for the Chinese polity.

CONCLUSION

With reference to the PRC, the article has demonstrated that youth education, work and citizenship can be influenced by changing domestic and global contexts, and that the state can play a vital role in facilitating these changes in three major spheres of youth. In the PRC, the 1978 policy of reform and opening to the world brought forth significant domestic economic and social changes and exposed China and its people to the world. All this, in turn, created new demands and concerns for the development of youth education, work and citizenship.

The PRC's need to reform its declining economy and increase its international competitiveness, as shown earlier, required more and better Chinese manpower; this, therefore, helped increase Chinese youths' access to EFA and post-EFA education. The economic reforms also forced the PRC to change its labour market from centrally planned to market oriented, and to create an opening for youths and employers to choose each other. Common to China's efforts to address youth education and employment needs was its use of law to protect youth rights by codifying important principles or norms promoted by the international community, despite the fact that more could and should be incorporated. To reify these rights, China expanded its education by stages (the EFA in late 1980s and post-EFA education in the 1990s) and introduced measures to regulate the new relationships and problems arising from the new market-oriented labour market.

In the PRC, youth education and employment are confronted by various challenges, including large-scale domestic migration, a challenge expected



to persist for decades, as China's migrant population is expected to reach 350 million in 2050 (National Health and Family Planning Commission, 2012). Such migration is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it has helped China ease youth and young adult employment problems nationwide, turning them into a strong labour force and boosting the economy of host areas and China as a whole. It is also an essential means by which Chinese people enhance their employment opportunities and improve their quality of living. Young people are the foundation of China's future economy and an essential source of migrant labour.

On the other hand, the large-scale migration reveals deep-seated problems concerning the localization of important national rights to education and other social welfares in an increasingly mobilized Chinese society. In places outside their registered domicile in China, migrant workers and their children are often treated, structurally and socially, as second-class citizens, and are not entitled to receive the same social welfares, mainly provided and supported by host governments, as their local counterparts. To mitigate this kind of structural discrimination, China needs to step up its efforts to ensure equal rights for all its citizens wherever they are in China. To this end, China could reconsider, for example, delinking entitlements from household registration and making related structural and financial rearrangements between the central and local governments to facilitate the delinking, such as opening public secondary and higher education in host areas to migrant students, and fostering social integration and mutual understanding between migrants and locals.

Compared to education and work, China has adopted far fewer international norms and practices to enhance youths' political and social participation. With a view to consolidating and sustaining CPC leadership, China has emphasised political work on campus and in the workplace, and reserved top national leadership posts to CPC members. In contrast, regardless of their political affiliation, the space Chinese youth have for direct social involvement and participation in local and national communities and affairs has been enhanced by the state's toleration of the expansion of both civil society and cyberspace. As such, Chinese youths and others are caught in a growing dilemma between limited political participation and increasing expansion of social participation.

A question that might worry China is, when will the widening discrepancy between political and social participation become a national political tide



demanding giving the Chinese polity equal opportunity for participation and competition in political elections? It is very difficult to separate completely political and social spaces. Although it remains to be seen whether the popularization of ICT will increase Chinese netizens' political participation to such an extent that it could "ignite a prairie fire of revolutionary, democratic change", it has already helped create "new spaces for individual self-expression and interest-group mobilization" (Leibold, 2011, p. 1036). Exposure to and participation in cyberspace could help Chinese youths acquire more knowledge about the concepts of equality, freedom, democracy and human rights (H. S. Li, 2008). Despite China's strong cyber-censorship, the popularization of ICT has helped turn Chinese netizens, including millions of youths, into a new powerful civic force by providing them with a broader and more convenient platform for expressing and discussing views on government policies and current national and local issues and affairs, and an efficient tool for calling for social action and protests. As increasing numbers of Chinese youths and adults participate in civil society and cyberspace, how to make the Chinese political system fairer, more open, and more just in the competition for political power, regardless of political affiliation, is an important challenge for China in the 21st century.

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**YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN:
EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP**

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a critical examination of the inter-linkages between youth education, development, empowerment, and engagement in Pakistan. Currently, the majority of the population falls within the youth age bracket of 15-24 years. The country stands at a critical juncture, where it can capitalize on this demographic dividend for transformational and sustainable socioeconomic growth. However, this paper argues that there is inadequate intersection and convergence between Pakistan's national and provincial Education and Youth policy frameworks. An in-depth overview of current trends in terms of quality of education and access to and participation in various forms of education programmes indicates that the current provision of educational services is deplorably inadequate in terms of quality and quantity. In order to address the challenges of educational and economic development, this paper asserts that education should be the lynchpin for broader and more inclusive socioeconomic development, and function as the interface between Youth and Education Policies. The failures of effective policy implementation and of fully integrating the interrelated issues relevant to the youth population produce unfavourable educational outcomes in terms of economic, political, and social engagement. Therefore, this paper proposes the use of the Capability Approach to inform education and youth policies, so that the country can harness the energy and potential of a burgeoning youth population that currently constitutes about two-thirds of the Pakistani population.

KEY WORDS

Pakistan; Youth; Social integration; Education policy.



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Youth Development and Education in Pakistan: Exploring the Relationship

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INTRODUCTION

Pakistan defines “youth” as people between the ages of 15 and 29 (National Youth Policy, 2009). According to this definition, approximately two-thirds of Pakistan’s population of 180 million is categorized as youth. The rate of youth population entering the workforce is increasing 3% annually (Planning Commission, Government of Pakistan, 2011). As argued by Barber (2010), Pakistan, with a populational majority of youth that is constantly expanding, stands at a critical juncture in terms of education, development, empowerment and engagement as far as socio-economic development is concerned. This valuable national resource, a demographic dividend, could be harnessed and converted into a tremendous force for sustainable social change; and the energies and talents of the youth could be channelled into achieving sustainable, grassroots-level socio-economic development.

Pakistan may choose to equip its youth with the proper knowledge, skills, attitude, social awareness, and enthusiasm for much needed socioeconomic development. This option will not only bring prosperity, social cohesion, harmony, and peace to society but also help overcome the multifarious challenges that contemporary Pakistani society is facing.

Youth education, development, empowerment and engagement are inter-related and interdependent fields, influenced by the socio-cultural context in

which policies and practices unfold. They also determine resulting outcomes. This paper will examine the opportunities Pakistan's National Education Policy provides for youth education, development, empowerment, and engagement. In addition, it will discuss how the National Education Policy intersects with the National Youth Policy of 2009 and the constituent provincial Youth Policies.

First, this paper will analyse the efficacy of educational service delivery to the citizenry of Pakistan, examining both the quality of education and demographic trends in terms of access to and participation in the various educational programmes that currently exist, including standard educational, technical and vocational programmes. The paper will then discuss the National Education Policy, its implementation failures, and how the National Education Policy intersects with the National and Provincial Youth Policies. Though educational development is a critical component of the national and provincial youth policies, analyses of policy and practices suggest a lack of intersection between the two policy frameworks. This paper argues that education should be the lynchpin for broader socioeconomic change and function as the interface between Youth and Education policies.

Second, this study will also examine the repercussions of insufficiently integrating all components of youth education in terms of outcomes for economic, political and social engagement, which is a result of ineffective educational service delivery. Lastly, we propose the use of the Capability Approach to inform education and youth policy in order to fully capture the dynamism of this burgeoning population and harness it for the social and economic development of the country. The Capability Approach puts due emphasis on educational services that allow individuals to develop the critical, analytical ability to undertake challenges and improve their own well-being. Furthermore, the Capability Approach provides a conceptual framework that underscores the need for diverse forms of educational programming that caters to the particular needs and experiences of a highly heterogeneous youth population.

ACCESS AND EQUITY IN EDUCATION

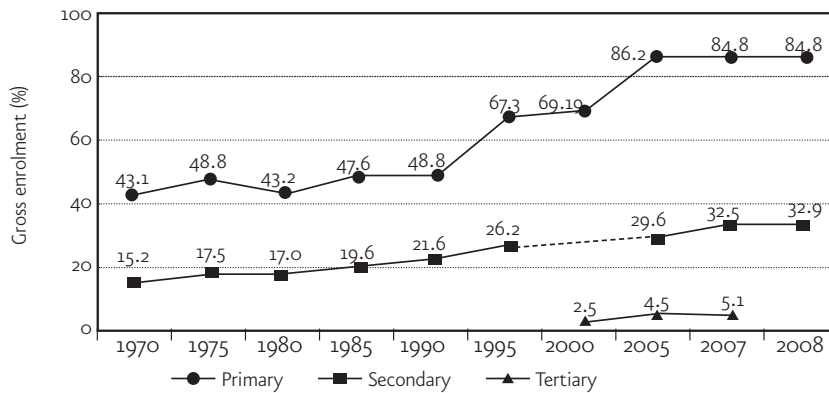
This section will discuss the quality of the educational services provided to the citizenry of Pakistan. Currently, most Pakistani children have either no access or limited access to quality education. This failure to provide educational services will be exacerbated as the population of school-age children



increases every year. This, in turn, will require a quantitative expansion in services to satisfy the increased demand. An analysis of why the existing provision of services is direly failing to meet the current demand will help us assess the extent to which current trends in policies and practices are responding and/or adapting to changing demographic conditions.

Pakistan has been a signatory to the World Declaration on Education For All (EFA). Considerable time has passed since the EFA commitment (in 2000) was made, but Pakistan is still far from achieving the universal literacy targets expressed in this international commitment (Government of Pakistan, 2009). According to 2011 estimates, the adult literacy rate (54%) is shockingly low when compared to other developing countries in the South Asian region. Participation at primary (92%), secondary (35%) and tertiary (8%) levels, compared with other South Asian countries, is deplorably low (UNESCO, 2012). There are wide disparities in access and quality across provinces and rural and urban areas.

CHANGE IN GER BY LEVEL, 1970-2008



Source: Unesco Institute for Statistics, 2010.

Access and equity are two important measures in determining the effectiveness of an educational system. An analysis of the trends over the years indicates slow but gradual improvement in access and equal participation in education across the various levels of education. According to the AEPAM (2013) annual report on educational statistics for 2011-2012, in Pakistan, only 63% of all primary school-aged children (5-9 years) are actually enrolled. It is further reported that at the middle stage of education, there has been an



increase of 6%. Only a mere 2% increase in boys' enrolment at this stage of education has been noted whereas, owing to significant equity related reforms, a significant increase of 11.7% has been observed in girls' enrolment all over the country. The status of boys' and girls' participation in education and ever-present gender disparities across various levels call for a critical analysis of opportunities and challenges facing youth in Pakistan.

A very significant increase of 34.78% in the higher secondary stage has been observed all over the country. In the census year of 2006-07, approximately 0.13 million students were enrolled at the higher secondary education level all over the country. Six years later, in 2011-12, the public education sector was providing services to about 0.20 million students aiming to complete their higher secondary education. A story of differentiated gender-based access to education across various levels of education is revealed in the country's overall statistics.

OVERALL PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION (GENDER-BASED ENROLMENT) 2011-2012		
LEVEL	MALE	FEMALE
Primary	57%	43%
Middle	57%	43%
High School	57%	43%
Higher Secondary School	72%	28%
Tertiary Education	58%	42%
OVERALL EDUCATION SYSTEM	58%	42%

Source: Academy of Education Planning and Management, 2013.

A critical view of the statistics reported in the above table shows the dismal status of education across the different levels. A plethora of educational reforms over the years has apparently led to improvements at the micro level, but the impact of these reforms remains invisible at the national level. Overall participation rates, as stated above, also indicate that appreciable numbers of young people do not have an opportunity to receive any education.

Country-wide, the total number of out-of-school children at the primary level is 8.3 million (AEPAM, 2013). Out of the 11.8 million boys in Pakistan, 3.8 million are out of school. Similarly, a total of 4.5 million girls out of the 10.9 million females in the primary age group are out of school. This reality contradicts the commitment to compulsory education made in the constitution, which provides for compulsory, basic, free education. The constitution states its commitment, “The state shall remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within the minimum possible period” (Government of Pakistan, 1973). This was further reinforced by the Federal Government’s inclusion of Article 5-A in the constitution, making the provision of basic education (Grades 1-10) an obligation of the State and guaranteeing the fundamental right to education for each and every child in Pakistan.

However, as Sathar and Lloyd (1994) asserted almost two decades ago, primary schooling (as well as secondary education) is far from being compulsory, as not all children are guaranteed access to school. Decisions about schooling may be affected, not only by family resources and household work requirements, but also by school availability and quality. Analyses of school participation rates from a gender standpoint further highlight how deplorable the situation is. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) for primary level education indicates parity in two regions, with varying levels of disparity in different regions. The situation, however, is more alarming at the secondary level where boys patently outnumber girls. With the country’s overall GPI score at 0.78, gender disparity at the secondary level reveals gender inequities, prevalent across the country. Regional differences, which harbour rigid socio-cultural norms, restrict female mobility outside the home, preventing women from attending school, and resulting in the variance of GPI scores. The lowest GPI is 0.16 for the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the highest is 0.98 for Islamabad, the country’s capital.

A study by Ashraf, Ali, Ali, Schultz and Ali (2013) targeting the schools of two provinces revealed that far fewer students attend school than the actual enrolment shown in the school records. It was apparent that many parents enrol their children but allow them to attend school only intermittently, or withdraw them prior to the completion of their primary level of schooling. However, such withdrawals are not recorded formally, as many children come back to school only to appear at the annual examinations. Their appearance,



not their performance, in annual exams qualifies them for promotion to the next grade level. Discussions with a grade four female student and her mother in one of the schools during the study revealed that after a few days, the girl stopped attending in order to work with her widowed mother as domestic help throughout the remainder of the year. The situation above reiterates the lack of educational opportunity reported by Sathar and Lloyd (1994). According to the two authors (2009), most households in Pakistan face financial constraints that affect the affordability of schooling; low incomes and the non-negligible, out-of-pocket costs of even public schooling, otherwise free, at the primary level prevent parents from sending their children to school. Financial constraints are compounded when there are many children to educate within one family. Therefore, parents do not have a choice in terms of sending all of their children to school: they are often forced to choose how many and which children they can afford to educate.

POLICY, QUALITY AND CURRICULUM

Pakistan's Education Policy (2009) recognizes the critical demographic transitions that the country is facing: the working age population was 48.8% in 1981, 46.9% in 1998, surged to 57.3% in 2004, and is expected to reach 61.7% by 2015. These quantitative indicators suggest that demographic transition rates have been continuously increasing (Government of Pakistan, 2009). The provision of education to facilitate this transition is a critical concern. To respond to this concern, one must further analyse the linkages between the various forms of education i.e. mainstream secondary and higher secondary education, technical, vocational, and professional education.

The Pakistani government is the largest provider of school education in the country. It contributed 2.2 of the GDP in 2012 (World Bank, 2013). Essentially three types of school systems exist in Pakistan. First is the public sector education system, which is organized into five levels: pre-primary, primary, middle, high school and higher secondary schooling, which then lead to higher education. The first three levels include science, mathematics, languages, social studies and Islamic studies. In their secondary and higher secondary schooling students select a specialized field of study that they wish to pursue. Some schools also offer vocational education at the second-

ary level. All public schools follow the national curriculum and use books developed by the official textbook boards. Students take public examinations, which are organized by official examination boards, during secondary and higher secondary education. Their performance in these examinations determines whether they are admitted to institutions of higher and professional education. Performance in these public exams also enables students to enrol in technical and vocational education programmes.

Though the government is the main provider of education, there has nonetheless been a mushrooming of private schools that form a second, parallel education system. These private schools generally use English as a medium of instruction, making such schools the most preferable option for parents (Ashraf, 2012). However, the quality of these private, English-language schools varies significantly according to the socioeconomic status of the clientele of these institutions. These schools can choose either the National Curriculum for secondary and higher secondary certificates or the Cambridge curriculum with O and A level qualifications. There is also the option to select a private examination board or assessment system that can contribute to the quality of teaching and learning processes.

Presently, *Deeni Madaris* (Arabic expression for religious seminaries) constitute yet another parallel system of education. *Deeni Madaris*, according to an official report, play a significant role in adult education in Pakistan. The main emphasis of these schools is to impart Islamic education; however, examples of *Deeni Madaris* offering formal secular education have also been cited (AEPAM, 2013). These institutions, 70% of which are privately owned, have their own management system and no interference from the government education portfolio. Enrolment in the *Deeni Madaris* is around 68% male as compared to 32% of female. This form of education, now established throughout the country, predominantly serves the poorest of the poor and children belonging to religious families. Most provide room and board and cover other costs. These and other operational expenses are paid for through public donations and government grants from the Zakat Fund (alms). However, since 1979, it has been reported that the real fuel stoking the *Deeni Madaris* has come from external sources, particularly Saudi Arabia, the Persian Gulf states, and other Middle Eastern countries who aim to propagate their own version of Islam (Nayyar & Ahmed, 2005). These schools are said to be promoting religious fundamentalism amongst young people, which in turn contributes to the violence and rampant terrorism inside and outside the country (e.g. ICG, 2004).



Contradicting these assertions, Husain (2005) insists that relatively few students, approximately 5% of the entire enrolled population, attend these *Deeni Madaris*. He considers government-run schools' inability to produce an educated citizenry responsible for the disorientation of the country's youth. Even today, according to AEPAM data (2013), a large majority of the student population (69%) is enrolled in government-run schools. In recent years, attempts to bring these institutions into the mainstream education system have been made to ensure the employability their graduates (Ministry of Education, 2008). While these *Deeni Madaris* have become highly controversial because of their alleged promotion of Islamic fundamentalism, Burki (2005) argues that the passions that surround these schools have frequently served to skew the discussion of Pakistan's education sector. Similar views have been presented by McClure (2009) who argues for a shift from exclusive focus on the *Deeni Madaris* to overall educational reforms.

Nonetheless, the presence of multiple education providers and systems complicates the educational scenario when it comes to the delivery and quality outcomes one desires for Pakistan's growing youth population. A critical review of policy and curriculum reveals some of the complexities.

A cursory reading of the National Education Policy (Government of Pakistan, 2009) shows that it is focused on developing self-reliant individuals, who are capable of analytical, original thinking, responsible members of society and global citizens. Nurturing the total personality of the individual to instil in him/her dynamism, creativity, and capability of rational thinking is stated as the chief concern of the National Education Policy 2009 (Government of Pakistan, 2009). Curriculum reforms have been at the centre of the educational change agenda and have led to the rigorous development of a curriculum with clearly articulated standards, benchmarks and learning outcomes with the potential to fulfil policy commitments for youth development (Majeed, 2009 as cited in Jamil, 2009).

The National Curriculum 2006 was approved for implementation in 2010/2011. Evidence shows that the curriculum has not been fully implemented due to the unavailability of textbooks. According to the Pakistan Education Panel (2013) report, some provinces have developed textbooks up to Grade 7 based on the national curriculum but other provinces are lagging behind, which has negatively affected timely implementation of the national curriculum. An analysis of the curriculum currently in place and its delivery reveals that the nature of teaching and learning processes across different

levels of education is mechanical and transmissional (Ashraf, 2009; Ashraf et al., 2013). There is a heavy reliance on rote learning and memorization of textbook material, which does not lead to the desired learning outcomes as articulated in the national curriculum.

Assessment of students' learning outcomes reveals that the education system is of appallingly poor quality. The National Assessment findings of 2007 report Pakistani students of Grade 8 scoring well below the scaled mean of 495 in the Trends in Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS) assessment in such subjects as Mathematics and Language. Pakistani students performed poorly compared with their counterparts in countries such as Iran, the Philippines, Morocco and Tunisia (Government of Pakistan, 2007). Similar results reported by recent assessments of primary education reveal that students lack the required competencies in numeracy and literacy, since more than 50% of the children in grade 5 were unable to deal with basic grade 2 skills (ASER, 2013).

A baseline study carried out by Aga Khan University – Institute for Educational Development to assess grade 4 and 5 students in Sindh and Baluchistan provinces showed that there was a larger performance gap for the constructed response (CR) questions than for the questions requiring a multiple choice response. Of the students who took the CR test, 23% of grade 4 and 47% of grade 5 students received a total score of zero. One explanation is that the students have a lower level of the literacy required to comprehend a question and construct a meaningful response (Ali, 2012).

This level of student performance also raises questions about the teachers' capacity and the quality of teaching and learning. For instance, the study (Ali, 2012) on students' learning outcomes found that teachers in selected schools of districts in Sindh and Baluchistan provinces spent an average 15 classroom minutes out of 35 on actual teaching, while the rest was squandered either by the teachers' tardiness or in disciplining the students. A closer examination of daily experiences of selected students from primary and lower secondary schools reveals an absence of active student engagement in learning due to the poor quality of teaching (Ashraf, 2009, 2012). These glimpses of the students' everyday experiences, their learning outcomes and associated challenges necessitate further investigation into the nature of curriculum reforms, their translation into textbooks, and the acceptance and implementation of the reforms at the school level (Durrani & Dunne, 2010).

The study (Ashraf et al., 2013) on educational governance reveals that a negative image of public schooling is spreading because of the subjective



decision-making processes and structures that exist across the various levels of educational governance. Matters such as teacher deployment and transfer, allocation of resources, community engagement, delivery of curriculum, enrolment and retention of students and teaching learning processes are found to be dealt with in such a cursory fashion that it has compromised the accountability mechanism and added to the complexity of educational issues. In effect, educational governance that displays an ad hoc approach to important decisions has hugely compromised the quality of teaching and learning in state-run schools. In particular, the study found that teacher deployment, appointments and transfers are politically driven and determined by individual interests.

As such, it has been widely recognized that the educational system in Pakistan, with its different curricula and delivery mechanisms, reinforces the existing, inequitable social structures (Rahman, 2004). Absence of opportunities for students to develop critical, rational thinking throughout their education further reinforces these inequities in society (Dean, 2007; Rahman, 2004). Currently, the public sector system and some private schools follow the national curriculum, while many elite private schools follow the Cambridge curriculum. *Deeni Madaris*, with a different curriculum, offer religious education. These different curricula produce different outcomes due to their disparate levels of human and resource investment, parental interest, teaching quality and overall school governance (Pakistan Education Panel, 2013). This prevents a great majority of youngsters in the public sector educational institutions and the *Deeni Madaris* from moving up the ladder of social mobility (Aly, 2007).

Weak governance structures and unfulfilled promises of educational policy jeopardize any expectation that the curriculum, through its implementation, would underscore the value of “fundamental rights guaranteed to the citizens of Pakistan, so that each individual develops himself/herself and the society at large, a civic culture strong enough to withstand any extra constitutional interference which threatens those rights” (Government of Pakistan, 2009, p. 45). Furthermore, insufficient financial input, low levels of efficiency for implementation of programs, and poor quality of management, monitoring, supervision and teaching add to the ailing education system (Memon, 2007). The three-pronged education system, as acknowledged in the context of Punjab, is producing three different classes within the province and causing even greater disparity. Moreover, undue emphasis has been on literacy [rates] and enrolment instead of on student development

(Government of Punjab, 2012). As discussed earlier, this polarization also reflects the dichotomy facing youth in other parts of the country.

To meet EFA and MDG targets and to meet parity goals, various reform initiatives have been undertaken with the support of national stakeholders and international development agencies. Since the education system of the country has regularly been cited as one of the most serious impediments to the country's achieving its potential, the international donor community has been active on this front for decades, contributing to reform initiatives (Hathaway, 2005).

Persistent effort has gone into reforming education in Pakistan with the aim of improving educational governance and thereby improving equal access to quality education. Education sector reforms, the move to devolution for better governance and community engagement in education, and improving teacher competencies by reforming teacher education have all been part of the attempt to tackle the problem of education quality from multiple angles. Reforms driven by an equity agenda with a focus on Education For All, Universal Primary Education [e.g. girls' stipend programs] have attempted to improve gender disparities across various levels of education (Ali & Tahir, 2009). Recently, the reform efforts supported by the Canadian International Development Agency and USAID have focussed on improving the quality of pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes and models to improve the quality of education across primary and higher secondary.

In line with Clark's (2005) view on the relationship between reform of Pakistan's system of higher education and reform at the primary and secondary levels, higher education in Pakistan witnessed a complete change in 2002 with the establishment of the Higher Education Commission (HEC). This commission aimed to facilitate the transformation of Pakistan into a knowledge economy by improving both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of higher/tertiary education. Preparing youth for a knowledge society and the global economy, as Rahman (2007) recognized, would require young people to be equipped with the mastery of subject matter, and the ability to think critically, while striving to be innovative, communicative, and to work effectively in teams, and develop entrepreneurship opportunities. This vision of education has been reiterated in the National Education Policy of 2009. The HEC has undertaken an agenda for reform, which addresses challenges posed by quality and relevance.



To face these challenges, the HEC has developed a comprehensive, strategic framework that identifies the core aims for reform, including: (1) faculty development, (2) improving access; (3) excellence in learning and research; (4) and relevance to national priorities (Rahman, 2007). The HEC has also initiated a robust indigenous Ph.D. programme, which aspired to produce 1200-1500 Ph.Ds. annually. A large number of scholarships have been provided for educated youth aspiring to pursue Ph.D. studies and advance their technological and educational goals and training inside and outside Pakistan.

The initiatives, particularly the 'robust' Ph.D. program launched by the HEC were well received, yet they are not exempt from criticism. The critics are of the view that a science and technology-oriented and economics-driven educational system may not necessarily usher in comprehensive, broad based, social reconstruction. Alternatively, they suggest creating an environment in the institutions of higher learning that promotes a culture of independent thinking, inquiry, research, and meaningful intellectual discussion of important historical, contemporary social, economic, cultural and political issues. The efforts are aimed at building institutions that create knowledge and help students to become informed, critical, and active citizens.

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Owing to the huge demographic transition, the current work force is the largest in Pakistan's history. With quality, access, equity and the relevance of its current practices acting as major challenges, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector's capacity to deliver much-needed training services to enhance the professional skills of Pakistan's growing workforce is insufficient. As such, different certificate courses, and diploma programs of varying duration have been offered by the provinces. Except for the three year-long diploma program, all the other options for technical and vocational education have proved to be inadequate. Integration of technical education into mainstream high school education did not work either (UNESCO, 2009). Different provincial institutions are involved in developing curriculum for TVET programs, while the National Institute of Science and Technical Education (NISTE) is the approving authority for DAE curricula and vocational subjects at the secondary school level. A study by UNESCO in 2009 found that there had been few revisions in the TVET curriculum.



With the development of the National Skill Strategy, reforms are underway to improve access, quality and delivery of technical and vocational education under the auspices of the TVET Reform Support Programme. According to this programme, there are about 315,000 places available in the formal TVET sector for some 950,000 new labour market entrants each year. The private sector has a significant share in technical and vocational education with 70 % of total TVET institutions, while the public sector has a share of 30%. Gender disparity is another visible feature of existing TVET enrolment, with female participants making up 38% of the total youth entering these institutions (AEPAM, 2013). Less than 6% of young people have acquired technical skills through the TVET system, and only 2.5% of them have received on-the-job training (TVET Reform Support Programmes, 2012). This means that the competence level of the Pakistani workforce is too low to make any significant contribution to corporate productivity and competitiveness. It also means that Pakistan is not fully tapping into its potential youth dividend.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND FAILURES

A critical analysis of the structural causes that result in poor governance and administration is outside the scope of this paper. We do maintain, however, that the quantitative and qualitative indicators of quality and access to educational services, discussed in the previous section, are the strongest evidence of policy implementation failure in Pakistan. Efforts to improve youth education and educational development, which are responsive to changing socio-cultural realities, either have been inadequate or have remained at the policy level. This section will briefly discuss the discrepancies between education policy and practice, and the failure of educational policy implementation in Pakistan.

Analyses of policy implementation tend to evaluate the formulation of policy and the actual implementation of policy as an integrated, singular process or as two, distinct processes, with the latter proceeding from the former. A critical review of current education policies and practices suggests that there are significant discrepancies between policy formulation and policy implementation. In the context of Pakistan, Ali (2006) presents several reasons for policy failures in Pakistan: unclear or ambitious policy



goals; lack of political commitment; faulty governance structures; centralization; lack of resources; and dependency on foreign aid. Other research studies have suggested that “premature loadbearing” and “isomorphic mimicry” account for the failure of policy implementation in developing countries. “Premature loadbearing” occurs when a policy that has the potential for success is undertaken in a context where the implementing partners are unable to effectively execute the necessary tasks (Pritchett, Woolcock & Andrews, 2010).

In Pakistan, successive National Educational Policies, and nine Five-Year Plans (1955-60; 1960-1965; 1965-70; 1970-75; 1978-1983; 1983-88; 1988-93; 1993-98) have been produced and passed, with minimal impact in terms of literacy, enrolment, and the levels of education achieved. An additional five-year plan was initially scheduled to be launched in 1998, but was discarded due to political and economic security conditions. In addition to these Five Year Plans, there has been a parallel series of National Education Policies, each introduced by the government in power: the 1979 New Education Policy; the 1972-80 Education Policy; the 1979 National Education Policy and Implementation Programme; the 1992 National Education Policy; the 1998-2010 National Education Policy: Iqra,; and the 2009 National Education Policy. Lastly, there have been a series of reform efforts such as the Education Sector Reforms: the 2001-2004 Action Plan; the 2001-2015 National Plan of Action on Education for All; and the Report of the Task Force on Higher Education in Pakistan: Challenges and Opportunities (Ali, 2006; Bengali, 1999).

The promises made in the successive National Educational Policies and Five Year Plans have largely remained unfulfilled. Not a single policy was followed by serious efforts to implement the plans and reform measures envisaged in the successive National Education Policies. One of the reasons behind the failure of educational reform efforts is believed to be the discontinuity in policies attributable largely to unstable or short-lived democratically elected governments. For over three decades, Pakistan remained under military rule (1958-1971, 1977-1988, 1999-2008), which disrupted any schemes for continuous policy implementation. Policies disappear with the governments that enact them. Consequently, the agenda of youth development envisaged in the national policies has become a phenomenon that is frozen in time.

Another reason is thought to be because the reforms and developments proposed in the policies and plans have not been harmonized with the resources that are actually available. Expansion and structural improvement

of the education system has inevitably required more resources, which are not made readily available to implement policy measures. As revealed by government reports, the shortage of resources has not been the only obstacle to achieving the targets laid down in education policies and five-year plans. Under- utilization or inappropriate use of available resources has also contributed to the failures in implementing policy measures (Bengali, 1999).

In conclusion, a close look at the policy implementation challenges reveals some of the weaknesses that have permeated national educational and youth education and development policies. These include: a narrow vision of youth education and development mainly based on mechanical processes; ambiguous and overly ambitious policy targets; an ‘ad-hoc’ and ‘outside-in’ approach to policy formulation; a lack of clarity about the role and responsibilities of government institutions concerned with youth education and development; and gaps between policy and practice.

The results of inadequate implementation of educational policies have been abysmally low levels of literacy and scholastic achievement, and the failure of the educational system to provide students with skills and training that they can translate into concrete employment opportunities.

INTERSECTION OF YOUTH AND EDUCATION POLICIES

As an inherently integrative approach towards social and economic development, the National and Provincial Youth Policies seeks to synchronize all issues relating to youth policy rather than viewing them as disparate concerns; and herein lies these policies’ main potential. Poverty, health, child labour, education, citizenship participation, and other concerns relevant to youth are undoubtedly interconnected. Yet educational policies are failing to adequately recognize and address such multi-faceted challenges, which often exacerbate each other, producing unfavourable educational outcomes.

The National Youth Policy of 2009, with a constituent action plan, was recognized as an important strategic move towards public policy on youth development in Pakistan (Government of Sindh, 2012). However, with the Eighteenth Constitutional Amendment of 2010, which devolved the subject of youth affairs to the provincial level, the provinces assumed the responsibility for youth-related issues. As a result, the newly developed National



Youth Policy has lost some of its legitimacy. Presently, the four provinces and the regions of Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir are at different stages of developing Youth Policies. The participatory approach is a ubiquitous feature of the policy development process throughout the country. Youth and other stakeholders have been consulted in order to foster a sense of ownership of the policies.

The Youth Policies – National and Provincial – given their integrative approach, provide an opportunity for greater synchronization and coordination between pertinent youth concerns such as education, child labour, and post-graduation employment opportunities. Yet the National Youth Policy does not make any explicit or implicit reference to existing education policy or how these policies will complement or enhance each other. Rather, it offers vapid generalizations, such as aiming to enhance “the availability of scholarships to carry out studies at higher secondary, under graduate and graduate levels within the country and abroad” (Government of Pakistan, 2008, p. 20) without discussing how the policy will strengthen the education system at the primary and secondary levels to ensure students’ preparedness for receiving and effectively utilizing scholarship opportunities. Moreover, the National Youth Policy offers overly ambitious and impractical suggestions, such as working towards “arranging interaction with Nobel Laureates” (Government of Pakistan, 2008, p. 13). Yet, there is no mention of how it will strengthen or complement the current educational system, and existing services and institutions (Government of Pakistan, 2008).

On the other hand, the Provincial Youth Policies delineate structures, policies, strategies and a vision with somewhat greater precision. Each province has issued its respective Youth Policy, issuing statements calling for multi-pronged approaches that are comprehensive, incorporate integrated vision and planning, and call for coordination between all key stakeholders, institutions, and governmental bodies. A review of the available provincial policy documents shows that there is a focus on motivating and inspiring youth for social issues by building their capacity to participate in the social and political arena; political empowerment; enabling their employability, and promoting entrepreneurship through financial resources. The policy documents also recognize the complexity of the youth development agenda and hence propose inter-sectoral collaboration (Government of Punjab, 2012; Government of Sindh, 2012). For example, the Province of Punjab’s Youth

Policy 2012 states that it “recognizes the emerging need to combine youth development work spread over various sectors (i.e. youth, labour, health, education, population, sports, culture, finance, etc.) within the framework of a comprehensive youth policy that integrates efforts of multiple stakeholders and turns youth into a dividend for the nation” (Government of Punjab, 2012, p. 4). In a similar vein, the Sindh Youth Policy states that it strives to empower youth at all three empowerment levels: economic, social, and political, stating that it “aims at building a youth who are economically active, socially hopeful and politically engaged in the Sindh province, and who possess useful competencies and tolerant values of good citizens of Pakistan” (Government of Sindh, 2012, p. 5).

Sufficient time has not yet elapsed to evaluate the efficacy of the provincial governments’ youth initiatives. However, we will note here that the Youth Policies’ integrative vision and implementation plans have been proposed without explicitly mentioning how and in what capacity the Youth Policy will interact with existing strategies, programmes, and policies pertaining to educational development. The references to education are cursory, which indicate the narrow scope of educational policy and processes for youth development that are envisaged by the policy makers. Revamping educational processes by introducing competency and comprehensive skill-based education, developing teaching and assessment areas for learning outcomes and assessment, curriculum review along with introduction of service learning and career counselling have been identified as key strategic interventions. However, the mechanism for implementing these interventions have been left unaddressed.

Overall, the Youth Policy documents fall short in identifying the human and material resources, governance, and timeline for implementation that are required. As such, policy making in Pakistan has not extended beyond the formulation stage, and this may explain many of the implementation problems (Ali, 2006) that have been encountered. Insufficient financial input, low levels of efficiency for implementation of programs, and poor quality of management and monitoring have historically proved major impediments (Memon, 2007). As far as the desired interface between youth development policy and educational policy are concerned, the perfunctory approach towards policy formulation and the corresponding action plans have also ignored early youth even though early education is a building block for later growth and development.



The analysis presented in Section One highlighted the enormous challenges facing youth when it comes to access to quality education. Persistent disparities on the basis of gender and rural or urban location within and between the provinces warrant a thorough and rigorous analysis of youth's access to universal, compulsory education to determine how likely they are to benefit from verbose policy assertions when they finally reach the "youth bulge." Once the provinces recognize education as a lynchpin for broader social change and as the interface and intersection between youth and education policies, they will also be driven to give due importance to the linguistic, ethnic, class, gender and religious diversity, which characterize the young people living within their varied geographical contexts.

Presently, available provincial youth policies seem to gloss over the diverse voices of youth, which may have emerged owing to the consultative process undertaken for policy formulation. Achievements in youth development are reported as a list of completed activities such as distribution of IT equipment, monthly financial assistance and skill training, organization of exchange programs and special quality schools. Yet describing successful activities only promotes a fragmented view and does not focus on the underlying principles of youth development as the development of human beings with a set of capabilities. Education aimed at developing the individuals' capabilities in order to expand his or her choices (Sen, 1999) would certainly lead to sustained human development.

The Capability Approach, discussed later, takes this view a step further. It views human development as a process of enhancing the real freedoms people enjoy by expanding their capabilities to do so (Sen, 1999, as cited in Hoffmann, *n.d.*).

UNFAVOURABLE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES: ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Educational policy intersects with three critical domains of youth development and empowerment that include economic political and social engagement. This section of the paper will discuss how ineffective educational service delivery and the repercussions of insufficiently integrating all the components of youth education have impacted outcomes of economic, political and social engagement. Because of changing demographic trends, youth



education, development, empowerment and engagement must be institutionally mechanized within the political, economic and social domains. As the Capability Approach has extensively highlighted, the provision of educational services is an indisputable pre-requisite for nurturing empowered and capable citizens (Nussbaum, 2006).

ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT: CHILD LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Pakistan currently faces two critical forms of employment challenges that correspond and intersect with the ineffective delivery of educational services. The first challenge is its pervasively entrenched system of child labour and the second is the country's high rates of youth unemployment, even among those who have received a complete education. The result is a distorted employment process: children are deprived of education due to forced or compulsory employment at an early age, and those with educational qualifications cannot translate their skills and training into employment outcomes.

CHILD LABOUR

Recent studies suggest that approximately 25 million school-aged children are not attending school. According to UNICEF estimates, as quoted in a report by the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child, 7.3 million children of school going age, at the primary level, do not attend school (SPARC, 2013, p. 33). The reasons for absenteeism, school-leaving, and poor retention are multifaceted and include poverty, health issues, and the absence of transportation infrastructure. Yet child labour is also a deeply entrenched reason that results from high levels of poverty; and it is a significant impediment to increasing enrolment rates. Currently, the Pakistani government does not generate statistics on child labour. However, estimates from the ILO indicate that in 2012, there were over 12 million child labourers in the country. Similar studies from UNICEF estimate that there were around 10 million underage labourers. Child labour accounts for over 50% (4.21 of the 7.3 million) children not attending school at the primary level (SPARC, 2012).



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Currently, youth unemployment rates exceed adult unemployment rates. “The causes of this high youth unemployment are manifold: lack of education, lack of skills, structural mismatch, divergence between the demographics of urban and rural areas, lack of experience, regional or province wise discrimination in the provision of job opportunities, sector imbalance” (Qayyum, 2007, p. 612). In the 15-24 year age bracket, the employment-to-population ratio was reported as 39.6 from 2010-2011, a 1.5 decrease from 2009-2010 levels.

Disaggregating this data reveals large gender disparities. Whereas the male employment-to-population ratio is 59.5 for the 15-24 age group, female employment-to-population for the same group is a mere 18.8. The relatively high employment-to-population ratio for men at all age groups is more indicative of the high number of low quality jobs than it is of full employment. Within the cultural and social context of Pakistan, men are predominantly the income-earners in a household, and thus must seek employment regardless of the quality of employment offered. Regardless of the contextual variables surrounding these quantitative indicators, all employment-to-population ratio levels are substantially less than those for South Asia, as a total region which is listed as 79.1 for males, 38.0 for females, and 59.1 for both sexes.

Quantitative and qualitative indicators of vulnerable employment provide a more contextually-specific and precise understanding of general employment trends in Pakistan. The Pakistani government uses the ILO definition for vulnerable employment. As quoted in the Government of Pakistan (2012), a vulnerable person is “one who is vulnerable to working under inadequate conditions because of weak institutional employment arrangements, and therefore is under risk of lacking decent work” (p. 20). In the age group of 15-24 years, 61% of the population is considered to have “vulnerable” employment (56.1 for males, 77.1 for females). In the age group of 15 years and above, the vulnerable employment rate is 61.6% (57.0% for males, and 78.3% for females) (ibid, 2012).

The high unemployment trends are a result of limited opportunities in the marketplace and educational programming that is not sufficiently tailored to the needs and experiences of both the youth and the contexts in which they live. According to UNDP estimates (as cited in Murtaza, 2013), approximately 71% of youth do not receive career counselling at school; 28%



of youth find their curricula to be irrelevant to the job market; and 88% of youth want to learn occupational skills. The provision of institutional mechanisms to translate acquired skills and learning into employment and the provision of counselling and orientation to lead students toward certain professional goals could mitigate the challenges of unemployment.

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Educational policy and youth engagement in mainstream politics, civic engagement, and democratic citizenship are mutually interdependent concerns. Quality education equips young people to actively and critically engage in democratic citizenship (Nussbaum, 2006). Currently, research suggests, “the content and quality of civic education does not prepare (youth) to play an active and responsible role in a democratic society” (Dean, 2007, p. 15). Furthermore, the current political party system in Pakistan does not provide an adequate basis for youth engagement in the political processes of democratic citizenship.

A recent research report (Jinnah Institute, 2013) indicates that the political parties are not taking concrete measures to reintegrate or re-engage the youth in mainstream politics. Rather, political parties operate through patronage-based policy approaches, through which they make commitments to the youth, but do not create opportunities for youth representation or inclusion within the political structure. As a result, the youth are politically marginalized and disinterested in political engagement. Also lacking critical thinking, social consciences, and the energy and power to vote, a substantial majority of youth is being exploited by the political parties to further their own agendas. Political parties have been accused of maintaining militant wings within their structure made up primarily of young people.

A survey of 1130 participants between the ages of 18 and 30 showed that 82% do not take an active part in politics. A 2013 survey conducted by the British Council revealed that “only 14% of the youth viewed the government and national assembly in a favourable light, and only 11% felt the same way about political parties”. Though these surveys and recent opinion reports suggest that the youth take a dim view of political institutions, they express enthusiasm for democracy and greater civic engagement for development. Without mechanisms for political inclusion, which are currently



lacking, political parties will continue to be incapable of responding to the requirements of the burgeoning youth population and will continue to be unaccountable when they fail to deliver on their commitments. Therefore, educational programming that produces students who engage in critical thinking will first require a type of education that prepares students for active, democratic citizenship. However, this will also require more concrete, inclusive initiatives generated by political parties that are willing to recognize and integrate relevant youth issues into the political process. Though the political inclusion of the youth population may compel parties to take the fulfilment of their promises more seriously, the feasibility of this initial step is questionable, given the poor state of education and high levels of illiteracy.

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Successive periods of military rule and political repression of social activism and civic engagement have stunted the institutionalization and expansion of avenues for non-political, social engagement. Research studies suggest that Pakistan's history of volatile and tumultuous political systems renders political approaches unappealing and unproductive. Therefore, civic engagement in economic and social development offers a preferable alternative that has the potential of producing more tangible results. As stated by Etra (2010), "What is needed is a mechanism to tap into and capitalize on the inherent civic spirit that young people and their communities feel by raising awareness about how young people can be engaged and the advantages (both for the young people themselves and the community at large) of doing so in a more formal and organized way" (p. 37). In this regard, the National Youth Policy (Government of Pakistan, 2008) does stipulate the creation of a "National Youth Volunteer Corps", though the policy prescriptions for implementation remain inadequate.

Research (e.g. Etra, 2010) has identified areas for further enhancing youth engagement, and suggests there is considerable opportunity, with sufficient coordination of all stakeholders, to capitalize on this potential. Therefore, there is a need for further synchronization between educational programmes and opportunities for youth engagement.

THE WAY FORWARD

Lastly, this paper argues that the Capability Approach can inform education and youth policy in order to fully capture the dynamism of this burgeoning population and harness it for the country's social and economic development. As we discussed earlier, scant and weak linkages between Youth and Education policies are producing unfavourable educational outcomes in terms of employment opportunities, political participation, social and civic engagement, and the general well-being of the country's young citizens. The paper has argued that the National or Provincial Education Policy should overlay and converge with youth policy and youth development.

The Capability Approach facilitates integration of youth and educational policy, placing due emphasis on educational services that allow individuals to develop the critical analytical capacity to undertake challenges and improve their own well-being. Furthermore, the Capability Approach provides a conceptual framework that underscores the need for diverse forms of educational programming that cater to the needs and experiences of a highly heterogeneous youth population.

The two key concepts of the Capability Approach are “functioning” and “capabilities”. Functionings are defined as the “the various things a person may value doing or being”, whereas capabilities “refers to the alternative combinations of functionings that are feasible for her to achieve. Capability is thus a kind of freedom” (Sen, 1999). Within the Capability Approach, education involves both intrinsic and instrumental values (Saito, 2003) by expanding and increasing an individual's set of capabilities. Education is critical for fostering healthy democratic citizenship.

The Capability Approach toward education emphasizes three components for the development of capabilities. First is the capacity “for critical examination of oneself and one's traditions”; that is, continuous questioning of traditions and prevailing social systems. The second is the capacity of the individual to see herself as a human being “bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition”, rather than to any one particular group. The third capacity is the “narrative imagination” – the ability to understand from another's perspective (Nussbaum, 2006). Altogether, these three capacities are considered critical for a healthy democracy and an active citizenry.

Pakistan is a diverse country with a multitude of languages, religions, ethnic groups, and other social groupings. Qualitative research (Ashraf et



al., 2012) has revealed the country's extraordinary heterogeneity when it comes to the specific needs and requirements of students, teachers, and schools. Moreover, recent reports suggest that Pakistan's public schools are not promoting religious tolerance (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, HRCP, 2009) and the country has been facing rising waves of intolerance and violence towards religious minorities (Human Rights Commission Pakistan, 2013; U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2013).

It is necessary for policy-making to acknowledge and respond to the highly heterogeneous socioeconomic contexts of the country in order to promote social inclusivity and tolerance. In this regard, "the Capability Approach does not explain the causes of educational inequality; it provides a tool with which to conceptualize and evaluate them" (Unterhalter, Vaughan & Walker, 2007, p. 5). Furthermore, adopting the Capability Approach toward education and youth policy will ensure a robust and continuous re-evaluation of the merits of "youth" as an explanatory category in policy-making. The rural-urban, gender, ethnic, and religious disparities in the population in terms of access to education, attainment of education levels, and most importantly, achievements of desired "functionings" necessitate a policy orientation that recognizes the heterogeneity within the youth population.

Secondly, this paper has argued that for education policy to fully enhance real freedoms, the quality of education should correspond to and produce outcomes that are relevant to both the needs of the marketplace and of the citizenry. "In other words, for education to fully enhance freedom and development, it is required that the learning needs of all are met through equitable access to an education of such quality that it leads to learning outcomes that ultimately enhance individual freedom" (Radja, Hoffmann & Bakhshi, 2004, p. 2).

However, in the context of Pakistan, there are considerable discrepancies between the forms of educational programming and resulting outcomes and opportunities for growth and development. The high rate of unemployment, the inability of youth to find meaningful and gainful employment, and the general socioeconomic stagnation of the economy result from inaccessible education that is not tailored to either the current or projected future needs of the youth population.

In conclusion, the Capability Approach does not constitute a framework for policy prescription, but rather informs policy-making at every stage of

its development and implementation, and encourages the integration and convergence of youth and educational policies, which will ultimately harness the potential of both policy areas.

Currently, youth and education policies do not adequately intersect to form streamlined policy-making and practice. This results in the marginalization and disenfranchisement of particular peoples, rather than the integration of the diverse ethnicities that make up the country. It is this integration that will shape Pakistan's citizenry into a collectively-conscious body with an engrained understanding of civic values and democratic citizenship.

The results obtained so far have evidenced wide disparities in educational achievement, a lack of real freedoms accorded to individuals, and general socioeconomic stagnation throughout the country. This paper argues that the Capability Approach can provide a visionary thrust for otherwise directionless and unsystematic policy-making practices. The youth population, who already constitute the majority of the population, and whose share is increasing rapidly, must be the focal point of examination, to ensure that their respective capabilities are enhanced and that the freedoms to which they are entitled are guaranteed.

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**NEOLIBERALISM, EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS
OF UNEMPLOYED YOUTH IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA**

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Dedicated to the memory of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela

ABSTRACT

Via the evocation of two personal narratives of lived experiences of/with youth in South Africa, the paper addresses issues relating to youth, unemployment, education and structural injustice. These narrative vignettes reflect events of injustice that occur within the human sphere and fall within the interstices between competing discourses as sites of struggle for meaning and supremacy. It is here where the lived effects of unjust political structures can be witnessed as violent assaults on individual and collective bodies, psyches and souls, while the indomitability of the human spirit rallies to rise above such adversity. Both experiences, while specific, nevertheless articulate a difficult 'glocalising' relationship with 'the general' and 'universal' in the global interconnectedness of injustice and the effects of a dehumanising ideology. They are underscored by a historical legacy of apartheid and authoritarianism, but advanced through a newer discourse of neoliberal, globalising modernism. Both ideologies converge in untroubled alignment through similarly operational codes of control and the endemic forms and frames of (in)difference. The paper argues that racialised unemployed youth in South Africa carry the burden of structural political dysfunctionality and state ineptitude, and they are pathologised and differentially constructed as 'failed' citizens as a consequence. Not only are South African youth expected to carry the burden of unemployment, but also the flag of the nation's political transformation as well, in a context of contradiction and maladministration overlaid by the debilitating effects of neoliberal governmentality. Youth identity is framed in nationalist economic terms, justified and advanced through the contemporary, global, modernist condition, supported by neoliberal capitalist relations. The historical, embodied and material injustices shape what is possible for youth, specifically unemployed youth, in South Africa today.

KEY WORDS

South Africa; Youth; Unemployment; Authoritarianism; Injustice; Nationalisms; Neoliberalism.



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Neoliberalism, Education and Citizenship Rights of Unemployed Youth in Post-Apartheid South Africa

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I have the right to be angry and to express that anger, to hold it as my motivation to fight, just as I have the right to love and to express my love for the world, to hold it as my motivation to fight, because while a historical being, I live history as a time of possibility, not of predetermination.

PAULO FREIRE, *Pedagogy of Indignation*, 2004

INTRODUCTION: A NARRATIVE OF INDIGNATION

My experiences of living in or visiting my homeland of South Africa have always exacted the most opposite and extreme of emotions in me: anger and love, despair and inspiration, indignation and hope. This last occasion was no different. Recently returning to South Africa to take up an academic position in a university in one of the country's most impoverished, rural provinces, an area I have not lived in before, produced its share of profoundly heart-wrenching experiences. These experiences reflected events of injustice that occur within the human sphere, events that fall within the interstices between competing discourses as sites of struggle for meaning and supremacy. It is here where the lived effects of unjust political structures can be witnessed as violent assaults on individual and collective bodies, psyches

and souls, while the indomitability of the human spirit rallies to rise above such adversity.

There are two specific incidences amongst many that haunt me. They are distinct yet connected via discursive traces of injustice. While specific, they articulate in a difficult 'glocalising' relationship with 'the general' and 'universal' in the global interconnectedness of injustice and the effects of a dehumanising ideology, underscored by a legacy of apartheid and authoritarianism, but advanced through a newer discourse of neoliberal globalising modernism. Both converge in untroubled alignment through similarly operational codes of control and the endemic forms and frames (Butler, 2008) of (in)difference¹.

I had not been teaching for more than a week at this 'newly transformed' university when an *isiXhosa* student in my class, I will call Xoliswe, came to speak to me privately in my office. He was from the previous 'Bantustan' (or 'separate homeland state') of the so-called *Transkei*, an impoverished region of the Eastern Cape that had been devastated by forced segregation under apartheid. He approached me because reading into my critical, social justice approach to teaching, he recognised that I was someone who was likely to be empathetic and disposed to assisting him, as he explained to me at the time. He was in despair after having approached many others for help.

Carefully, Xoliswe relayed the details of his desperate situation to me and asked for advice: Until that day, he had been sleeping on the floor of a science laboratory some nights or on the dormitory room floors of some

¹ A highly visible example of the untroubled alignment of the *modus operandi* of the apartheid regime and the newly neoliberalised South African post-apartheid state in respect of levels of authoritarianism, entrenched codes of control, and indeed the extent of the brutality of the violence was the incident at Marikana platinum mine in 2012.

On 16 August 2012, police in South Africa opened fire on striking miners in Marikana killing 44 and wounding many more. This constituted the single biggest act of violence against civilians by the police since the end of the apartheid era, and the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 (Satgar, 2012b). The action received international condemnation and was deemed a seminal event in modern South African history amidst wide-spread industrial action that impacted much of the mining sector in 2012. Indeed, 2012 saw more labour discord and socio-political unrest in the country than any other previous year since the end of apartheid in 1994. More broadly, some media observers have wondered whether the strike over wages and working conditions and resulting violence at Marikana did not represent an extreme expression of anger and resentment at the growing wealth gap in South African society. With unemployment hovering around almost 50% of the workforce, and increasing disparities in living standards between the upwardly mobile black middle class, political elite and the society at large, discord is evident through much of the South African social formation. The ANC led government is a frequent target of heated criticism at its failure to address basic economic inequalities and delivery of services, from sanitation in townships to school textbooks, and political opponents are seizing on these sentiments in an effort to exploit this weakness ahead of the national elections scheduled for 2014.

students who had been kind enough to let him stay with them. Having no money whatsoever, he was completely dependent on hand-outs from other students for food. Sleeping on the floor of university premises or in other students' residence rooms was strictly forbidden, yet he had no choice. He ran the risk of being expelled if found out.

His financial situation was beyond his control, yet he was criminalised for it. He had been waiting to receive his government-funded *Funza Lushaka*² bursary to be able to pay for outstanding tuition fees from the previous academic year and thus be able to register for the new academic year. He had already missed an online test for a course, attaining a zero for it because the university's course website would not allow him access as he was not a registered student. Being economically disadvantaged placed him in a vulnerable position so that he was also epistemologically disadvantaged in ways that perpetuate economic and social disadvantage.

Xoliswe had been assigned a room in the residence, but the university would not release it to him until he had registered. He could not register until he had paid his fees. He could not pay his fees until the government bursary had been paid to him. He could not borrow from a bank in the interim as he had no collateral. I was soon to learn that literally hundreds of impoverished students, (perhaps thousands across the country), were in the same situation of being forced to pay fees and register before their *Funza Lushaka* bursaries had been paid out. And this happened year after year. They are in effect punished for being poor. He had gone to the secretary of the director of residences and appealed to her to allow him to have a meeting with the director. She refused. He was just a lowly student who could not waste the director's time. He went to the bursaries office to see if he could elicit help that way and they would not see him either. Too many students were in a similar situation and the unit's institutional claim to modernist efficiencies superseded empathy. In the same way, he had gone to see if he could receive assistance from the student affairs office, also to no avail. Keeping to rules was posed as the reason for indifference.

After nearly a month of trying to get help from every quarter, Xoliswe was no further than when he had started. The indifference to his plight was

² This is a National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) bursary available to students in financial need that meet the academic criteria. It was instituted in the post-apartheid injunction to provide access to education for economically disadvantaged South African youth.



consistent and ubiquitous. I looked at his transcript from the previous year to seek ammunition for why this student was 'worthy' of assistance. How did I know that I would need this information as ammunition? I had learnt fairly quickly that South African youths' citizenship was constructed in terms of access to the labour market via educational 'learning outcomes', 'competencies', 'skills', 'attributes' and 'educational attainment', language ubiquitous in policy documents within this Higher Education institution and others. His results had been very good. There was no 'good reason' not to assist him. His only 'fault' was poverty and the failure of governing systems around him³.

I picked up the telephone receiver. Xoliswe's situation was intolerably unjust! Within an hour after a few phone calls demanding a response and emails sent under my title as professor to the very people who would not entertain seeing him, Xoliswe had a place in residence with immediate effect and he was able to register, even though the *Funza Lushaka* bursary had not come through yet. Also, his outstanding fees from the year before had been covered by another bursary that was released to him. The play in the performance of power was clearly revealed. It only took my title and one hour to turn the tide on his desperate situation. How many Xoliswes were out there, and how much stress must students like Xoliswe have to endure in having to carry the burden of constructed disadvantage? Why was it acceptable to treat him and his fellow *Funza Lushaka* bursary peers that way? The dire failure of systems of support and enablement, and the multiple and

3 Breier (2010) in a study, using the University of The Western Cape (UWC) as a case, examines the impact of lack of finances on student access to higher education and student retention. Her comments provide insight into the ubiquitous nature of the difficulties students face in South Africa, the way in which disadvantage begets disadvantage, and how poverty is sustained and reproduced. She notes: "All the 21 UWC academics and administrators who were interviewed for the Student Pathways Study mentioned poverty as a major reason why students leave UWC prematurely. For some it was the single greatest issue. Administrators pointed out that although many students receive funding from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), a number of factors make that funding insufficient to cover all their needs. Firstly, although NSFAS allocations are announced at the end of the preceding year [academic year and calendar year are synonymous in Southern hemisphere universities], the first tranche to institutions is only released on 1 April, which is the beginning of the government's fiscal year. Many institutions, particularly the HBUs [historically black universities], experience cash flow problems in the first quarter of the year and consequently demand an upfront payment from students (DoE, 2005). At UWC, non-resident students were required to pay R3,000 and resident students R3,500, at the time of the interviews, which equates to the monthly income of the greatest proportion of the leavers' parents/guardians. Staff in the financial aid office also reported that this payment caused a great deal of distress for some students. Although there was a (NSFAS defined) means test to establish whether a student qualifies for NSFAS funding, there was no test to determine whether a student had the means to pay the upfront amount. Some students genuinely did not have the money to pay even the R580 portion of this amount, which was for registration" (p. 98).

interconnected systems of oppression that reproduced structural inequality instantiated themselves and were embodied in Xoliswe's struggles and the stress and suffering he was forced to endure as a normalised, racialised, classist condition of the quotidian.

This incident provides a window into the plight of South African youth in their struggle for opportunity and wellbeing, despite the ongoing diversity and transformation discourses that were to herald greater democratic rights, equal opportunity, and a more intentional humanisation. Despite an ongoing post-apartheid policy of 'black economic empowerment' and affirmative action, poor youth in South Africa still have little access to opportunities and wellbeing in a context where your worth as citizen is determined by your potential contribution to the labour market. If the labour market cannot meet the needs of these youth in the context of the nation state's so-called lack of competitiveness within global markets as a developing economy, then the fault lies with youth 'lack' – deficit discourses constituted in terms of lack of ability, lack of skills, lack of competencies and requisite attributes. The individual youth carries the burden of such political representation, deflecting blame away from unjust societal structures and oppressive social institutions and relations. Youth identity is framed in nationalist economic terms, justified and advanced through the contemporary global modernist condition, and supported by neoliberal, capitalist relations. Such citizenship criteria construct hierarchies of access and acceptance outside the control of impoverished youth in ways that replicate (in)difference and (re)define (in)human(e)ness.

YOUTH, EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

YOUTH UNDER PRESSURE AND CONTRADICTING IMPERATIVES

In 2005, South African Labour Minister Mdladlana described youth unemployment as "a powder keg waiting to explode unless something drastic is done to address it" (Department of Labour, 2005, in Marock, 2008, p. 5)⁴. The

⁴ Some reports reflect youth unemployment in South Africa as up to 55% (Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/25361741>).



pressures placed on South African youth post-apartheid, the so-called ‘born frees’⁵, has been extensive and has emanated from several quarters. Not only has this generation of youth been expected to absorb the consequences of the failure of apartheid, but also the failure of the utopianisms created through a highly-vaunted new democracy. They have been expected to take up the standard of social transformation and undo the legacy of apartheid in a single generation⁶, tasks demanding of them the requisite knowledge and advanced critical thinking capabilities on which to execute.

At the same time, they have had to bear the brunt of economic hardship borne out of post-sanction, debilitated, economic circumstances; the trials and tribulations of a conflict-ridden developing economy in a colonised African context; and, more recently, the economic consequences to South Africa of the 2008 global economic crisis and its ongoing social and economic disorder, fomented by the globalising grip of capitalism in an ever-interconnected, neoliberal world. The pressures to be better educated are not tempered by the promise of employment, as rising unemployment reflects the developing economy of South Africa in stress.⁷ In addition, structural changes in the post-1994 labour market have, ironically, and despite affirmative action policy initiatives, resulted in continued unequal access to jobs, particularly for new black graduates with generalist, non-professional degrees in the Arts, Commerce, and Management. These graduates have not enjoyed the same access to the labour market as their white counterparts who have had greater access to existing capital and been able to utilise ties to family, friends and networked contacts to find formal employment (Kraak, 2010).

5 This is a popular term for South African youth who were born approximately after 1994, the date of South Africa’s first democratic elections and the transition to a new democracy. These youth have never lived under apartheid, have theoretically gone to ‘integrated schools’, but will nonetheless be living out the ongoing legacy and consequences of the destructiveness of apartheid doctrine and policies.

6 Apartheid affected every aspect of life in South Africa, and took at least 5 decades to entrench itself in various forms and degrees as normalised within political and social structures, ideological ways of knowing and being, and the quotidian.

7 Joyce Banda, President of Malawi, referenced the issue of the need for “decent jobs” for “millions of young people” in the SADC (Southern Africa Development Community) region as a priority not only for South Africa but Africa at large in her eulogy to Nelson Mandela at his funeral in Qunu (Retrieved December 15, 2013, from <http://www.sapeople.com/2013/12/15/transcript-president-joyca-banda-inspiring-eulogy-nelson-mandela-523/>).

As South Africa has embraced global capitalism within neoliberal tenets⁸, an emphasis on science and technology as the disciples of ‘economic growth’ and prosperity have reshaped what counts as important to know within the New Knowledge Economy. This reshaping has deflated the importance of the Arts and a robust Social Science⁹ that would provide the intellectual domain for young South Africans to think through plausible, workable, and critical alternatives to a social and economic *status quo* that repulses possibilities and limits opportunities.

Despite ongoing transformation discourses, the intensification of economic rationalism that finds ideological and epistemic expression in narrow instrumentalism, economic pragmatism and scientism has also served to diminish the democratic capacities and necessary ontologies of agency that would provide the epistemic capabilities and commensurate socio-political traction for South African youth to challenge and change their circumstance and that of their communities. Instead, the individualistic and group capacity-leaching effects of the new neoliberal, economic order is controlled through rhetorical manoeuvres and powerful, hegemonic discourses that not only dehumanise already alienated, disadvantaged, unemployed or racialised youth, but actively seek to further subjectify and marginalise them as ‘failed’ citizens of the state.

8 As Satgar (2012a) aptly explains: “Post-apartheid South Africa had two choices in this context: to continue the struggle in the context of transition to realize historical aspirations and the non-racial South African dream, or to capitulate to the neoliberal onslaught. The latter option was far from inevitable, as some ‘realist’ critics would suggest” (www.globalresearch.org).

9 CODESRIA (Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa) is an example of a pan-African initiative that fosters robust and context-specific African research. The organisation recognises that it is only in having coherent and robust African-focussed Social Sciences that African problems and concerns can be addressed with the requisite sensitivities to gender, power and context. A few noteworthy objectives in the mission statement of the organisation are listed as:

- Promote and facilitate research and knowledge production in Africa using a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach. The Council is committed to combating the fragmentation of knowledge production, and the African community of scholars along various disciplinary and linguistic/geographical lines;
- Promote and defend the principle of independent thought and the academic freedom of researchers in the production and dissemination of knowledge;
- Encourage and support the development of African comparative research with a continental perspective and a sensitivity to the specificity of the development process in Africa;
- Strengthen the institutional basis of knowledge production in Africa by proactively engaging and supporting other research institutions and their networks of scholars within its programmes of activities. As part of this goal, the Council also actively encourages cooperation and collaboration among African universities, research organisations and other training institutions;
- Encourage inter-generational and gender-sensitive dialogues in the African academy as a further investment of effort in the promotion of awareness and capacity for the use of different perspectives for knowledge production (Retrieved September 14, 2013, from www.codesria.org).



Kraak (2010) notes that in policy discourses on ‘employability’ and the various ways in which this term is deployed in the South African national context, individuals carry the ‘fault’ of unemployability through being constituted in terms of deficit – lack of ‘skills’, ‘inappropriate’ education or training, or insufficient effective ‘competencies’. Thus it is ‘individual attributes’ that determine employability and the individual that carries the responsibility for the labour relationship and the ‘success’ of the enterprise. This viewpoint is enabled by the prevalence of a particular language of employability in the South African policy arena. Patel (1995, in Marock, 2008) states that employability skills are those “skills that are required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one’s potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions” (p. 9).

The way in which the individual bears the burden of representation for employability is also captured in the language of the South African Federation for Mental Health (2006), which states that, “employability is about having the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment if required. For the individual, employability depends on their assets in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess; the way they use and deploy those assets; the way they present themselves to employers; and the context (e.g. personal circumstances and labour market environment) in which they seek employment” (in Marock, 2008, p. 8).

Essentially, employability, in true managerialist parlance, is viewed in the South African context as ‘skill’ and ‘aptitude’, ‘behaviour’ and ‘will’ (ibid.), a psychologising of individuals that, in defining the negation, notably ‘the unemployable’, gives way to a pathologising discourse that dehumanises and constructs the individual as wanting. This lends credence to the stigmatisation of unemployed South African youth who then bear the blame for their own unemployment, a deflective manoeuvre of the neoliberal state.

In contrast, the Education Special Committee of the Japan Federation of Employers’ Association defines employability as both the “skills that enable worker mobility” (ibid.) and the “skills that are demonstrated in a company that enable a worker to be employed on a continuous basis” (ibid. p. 9), thus shifting the burden of responsibility onto the employer. It is a position that is not common currency in South Africa. Further, the endemic efficiencies

and ‘skills’ discourse that surrounds policy on employment in South Africa, such as constant reference to ‘technical skills’, ‘computer skills’, ‘communication skills’ and ‘social skills’ has also served to tie education directly and instrumentally to the labour market. It is a relationship that is ubiquitous in the neoliberal, South African state, and discursively reduces education to an act of ‘training’ and mere skills development.

This places South African youth in a double bind. On the one hand, they must carry the torch of reimagining and enacting the possibilities of a new, transformed, democratic, non-racial South Africa. They must develop the intellectual agency to ensure the sustainability and wellbeing of the South African nation state in the context of global political and ecological imperatives. They must seek as yet-unimagined alternatives that challenge the discourses of change in South Africa that have put the country on a pathway of conformism to the neoliberal capitalist world order without ready alternatives. These mandates and imperatives require deepened senses of critical consciousness and social justice commitments and agency, with the requisite critical, intellectual capacities, knowledge of democracy and history, global awareness, and robust ontologies of agency and social engagement that attend them. On the other hand, the current neoliberal pressures have created the expectation – not of a citizen that might challenge the status quo – but of a *homo economicus*, a subject of capital. After a post-1994 restructuring in line with existing global, neoliberal rationalities, the existing schooling system and Higher Education sector in South Africa is oriented to meet the needs of capital, although it fails even at this¹⁰. Reducing education to managerialist and economic instrumentalities defeats its capability of engendering critical thought and justice-oriented, intellectual engagement and agency. Even the now-popular discourses on ‘responsible citizenship’ in schools (as part of ‘Life Orientation’ skills) and higher education institutions are often marked by ‘how to’ training manuals that are socialising, if not indoctrinating, in their pre-authored prescriptions that do not disturb the structural *status quo* or the particular ethic of change.

10 As Baatjies (2005) notes: “Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), like most other public spaces (in South Africa) cannot escape the onslaught of neoliberal militancy that claims to provide the revolutionary solutions to social problems in a country still heavily stained with the deeply rooted legacies of apartheid” (p. 1).



In the Harold Wolpe Memorial Trust open dialogue held in Cape Town in February 2006, a discussion between speakers Haroon Bhorat and Joy Papier, (with respondent Salim Vally and Maureen Robinson as chair), took place that addressed the connection between education and youth unemployment as a crisis in South Africa. In that open dialogue, certain statistics came to the fore that highlighted the particular criteria that reflect racial, age-based and educational differences in rates of unemployment. These statistics clearly connect the unemployment crisis with the country's ongoing educational crisis. Youth unemployment matters, not only due to reasons of human rights and dignity, but also because it impacts the lifetime employment trajectory of the individual, while impacting the family and community as well. Levinsohn (2008, in Rankin & Roberts, 2011) shows, for instance, that once a young person finds a job in the formal sector, retention in formal employment is likely (p. 1).

As noted by Bhorat in that dialogue (Bhorat, Papier, Vally & Robinson, 2006), not surprisingly, the group most vulnerable to unemployment is that of black females in the 15 to 24 age group, both urban and rural. These groups constitute 85% and 84% of the unemployed, respectively. The average unemployment rate for black youths in this same age group is 78%, and the rate of unemployment drops between 25 and 34 years of age. The vast majority of youth between ages 15 to 24 have never held a job, and educational level plays a key role in employment differentiation. Nevertheless, race, gender and location all play a part in determining unemployment in South Africa. The most disadvantaged person in the labour market is likely to be a black female living in a rural area.

When educational level comes into play, unemployment statistics reflect the educational crisis keenly. As Bhorat noted, in the 15 to 24 age group, a youth with incomplete secondary school education has a 75% chance of being unemployed. If they have a matric (grade twelve graduation), this drops to 66%. Nevertheless, recently this statistic has increased rather than dropped. Those with tertiary education but without a degree, have a 50% chance, while those with a degree have a 17% chance of not having a job. Consequently, youths that leave school early make up the vast majority of the jobless, and, according to Bhorat, there is insufficient support in the system to assist in redirecting them back into what is known in South Africa as Further Education and Training (FET). There is also little available to provide

young people with information about careers and the labour market (Bhorat et al., 2006). One could argue that access to the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1996) needed to enable access to knowledge of careers and the labour market is hinged to historical advantages and parental, formal educational qualifications enjoyed by particular racial groups under apartheid, and to the reconfiguration of advantage in the post-apartheid context.

It could be argued that unemployed youth are indirectly supported by the South African government by way of pensions and child grants¹¹, but pathways out of the cycle of poverty and dependence are not readily available, pointing to the failure of policy and a lack of foresight. Even though there have been job-creation programmes since 1994, only two million jobs have been created, while seven million citizens remain jobless in a context where technology is replacing human skills (Bhorat et al., 2006). Arguably, the political will of the neoliberal state in South Africa to address this trend through an ideological shift in policy is not forthcoming.

Later in the open dialogue, Bhorat (ibid.) controversially asked whether one would rather have a job with a low wage or remain unemployed. This conundrum raises a number of critical issues on human rights and the abuse of youth. Many youth in South Africa today accept low-paying jobs or unpaid internships below their qualifications in order to secure any kind of job at all. I argue that the crisis in unemployment performs itself in ways that lend credence to the exploitation of youth, so that the relation of exchange becomes a form of indentured slavery. This too is a mark of the neoliberal world order, where accrued benefits and the human right to prosperity is denied and justified under the modernist auspices of 'efficiencies', 'necessary austerity' and 'economic crisis.' In Marxian terms, there is an exploitative relationship with the labour capital of many South African youth whereby an unfair exchange for labour takes place that is marked by a disinvestment in their wellbeing and that of the families and communities that depend on

11 While typically the neoliberal state tries to devolve responsibility for poverty onto the individual, on the surfaced this example seems to reflect that the South African state still holds a state dependency relationship with the impoverished individual. In reality, the South African state offers very little in terms of state benefits and a social net, much less than other highly neoliberalised Western governments such as the UK. With little help from the state and no offers of guidance in terms of careers and opportunities, poor South Africans have little options open to them. This situation provides the reasons for the high crime rate, which the state does little about to address either. Further, resistance and solidarity initiatives by the disenfranchised have been met with increasing police crack-downs and brute force in recent years. For poor South African youth, the noose gets pulled ever tighter.



them. Youth are placed in the invidious position of requiring ‘work experience’ and the global criterion of employment competition makes them more ready to take on low-paying or unpaid positions in the hope of future employment. This is part of what Harrison (2010) refers to as a “transnational bundle of practices” (p. 98) that cue the “neoliberal international regime” (p. 94). Austerity practices in the EU and the plight of unemployed youth there are connected to the same type of practices in South Africa, operationalised within the ambit of globalising neoliberalism, and hence normalised and rationalised under its efficiencies discourses.

The hyper-pragmatism and ‘future-orientated’ nature of neoliberal capitalism provides the ‘common sense’ for this exploitative relationship. Thus, the hyper-neoliberal South African state and its attendant managerialist discourses work in political contradiction to the justice-oriented criteria of the South African constitution’s transformation agenda, one might argue as being a serious flaw in the fabric of this fledgling democracy.

In the debate, Papier (ibid.) raised further concerns. In her particular choice of language to describe her concerns, it is noteworthy that such language is recruited from a particular linguistic repertoire. The embedded assumptions enacted through this linguistic performance alludes to the purpose of education as being vocational only, and this is ironically justified under the premise of social justice. In effect, this particular parlance constrains conceptions of social justice so that it aligns with neoliberal modernist rationalities. There is an absence of discursive performance to incite any other imaginaries and possibilities for alternative means of engagement. The agenda for dialogue on the relationship of education to employment is posited on these terms and the pre-authored language has become ubiquitous to the national debate amongst communities within development economic politics in South Africa. In the process, voices of parents, students, educationalists, and politicians converge in a ‘common sense’ rationale that is reproduced as an unquestionable, prevailing ‘truth’. As Papier comments:

The learning society sees learning as geared towards the achievement of credentials which are supposed to be relevant to the labour market, and which ensure inclusion in a knowledge-based learning society, and it is herein that lies the rub. New vocational qualifications were intended to meet these twin goals, yet the Working Group on Reform established by the Department for Education and Skills was asked, as recently as 2004, to deal with the com-

plaints from employers and higher education that “young people leave education without the knowledge, skills and attributes necessary to function in the workplace or education”. Furthermore, vocational programmes were criticised as being fragmented and confusing, only some having credibility with employers, not being perceived as worthwhile in their own right, and parents and learners being unenthusiastic about the status and quality of the learning on offer (Bhorat et al., 2006, p. 4)

The prevailing performance of ‘relevance’ discourses and the reification of ‘the real’ over ‘the academic’ or ‘intellectual’ perpetuate the hyper-pragmatic pull of the neoliberal zeitgeist, so that only vocational learning counts as ‘real learning’. From the perspective of South Africa in ‘crisis’, it is not difficult to comprehend the dominance of this reconstructed hierarchy of knowledge (which renders indigenous ways of knowing as being equally as irrelevant as that of Western Enlightenment in this new configuration) when we note the contraction of the formal sector labour market and the concomitant ‘skills shortage’ assertions that feed the performances of ‘failure’, cynicism, and ‘crisis’ in South Africa.

The social and formal practices of neoliberalism deepen each time ‘crisis’ is performed creating the necessary vulnerabilities of economic development politics for control to be encoded and entrenched. As Pieterse (2010) reminds us: “Crisis is intrinsic to development [and] that development knowledge is crisis knowledge” (p. 2). It is a notion inherent to economic development in the African context whereby “the ideology of development (is) exploited as a means for reproducing political hegemony” (Aka, 1996, p. 9). This sense of urgency in development discourses on ‘relevance’, ‘the real’ and ‘crisis’ as a pragmatic common-sense response come through clearly in Papier’s words:

Year after year we fail our learners, not only in the classrooms but when they leave schools in the hope of earning a living. The system fails them by offering few viable options for work or learning or both. Learning is either too expensive or too irrelevant and formal employment scarce. Vocational qualifications need to become desirable because they offer real learning and real skills, inspire confidence among employers, are affordable by the masses who need training, and because the learning pathway is clearly sign-posted. This is what the policy has promised, but it seems we are still a long way off from achieving it (Bhorat et al., 2006, p. 6).



Papier's 'the masses who need training' typifies the general attitude toward the broader South African population, which is perceived as illiterate, uneducated and poor. This is the group into which poor youth fall. This does not project a vision of possibility of a structurally-transformed society premised on egalitarianism and justice. It is, instead, a discursive reproduction of the *status quo*, where 'the masses' are recruited into existing relations and where education is not viewed as a powerful intellectualising means of creating and enacting agency and alternatives to that *status quo*. As Harrison (2010) implies, the neoliberal repertoire reconciles itself to existing fragilities of the state and society within those structures. In this way, the social divisions of labour produced by apartheid align well with the neoliberal production of labour pyramid, and the existing intellectual-labour hierarchy is reinforced through similar authoritarian means while holding in place the same racialised, classist and gender inequalities as before, albeit only slightly reconfigured for the 'new South Africa'.

Nevertheless, other analysts argue that creative alternatives lie with 'quality' of education, not an increase in the mass production of vocational training *per se*. Erasmus, Steyn and Mentz (2005) speak of the benefits that education can provide. They posit that South Africa's economy has suffered under low educational standards. In fact, unlike Papier, these authors state that the major challenge lies in the economic shift on the global market away from primary labour to positions that demand a higher level of education (*ibid*, 2005, p. 18) and a different type of 'skill-set'. They profess that as unemployment has become rife, exacerbated by the globalisation of informatics, the criterion to meet employment standards has become dependent upon levels of education. Their outlook is highlighted by their acknowledgement of the diminishing jobs available in the formal sector, leaving only the remaining informal sector to make up for the former's inability to provide employment. They state: "the informal sector is indeed seen as a sector with great potential for creating jobs for people who have not been able to access the mainstream economy" (Schlemmer and Levitz, 1998, p. 78, as cited in Erasmus, Steyn & Mentz, 2005, p. 21). Whilst their view of education carries the same economic instrumentality as Papier's, they differently emphasise the need for higher levels of education. This is as opposed to those that would advocate for an abandonment of the intellectual domain in favour of a purview of education that is reduced to 'training' for 'the masses', while its more robust intellectual manifestation is only available for the privileged few in line with capitalism's Maslowian pyramid.

These are the debates in which youth in South Africa are currently enmeshed, their options as racialised and gendered young people falling within the interstices between conflicting debates on employment, the economic and developmental future of the country, postcolonial aspirations, and the various ways in which the framing of the purposes of education conflict with the prevailing realities of contemporary South Africa.

Not only are there socialising practices to attend to via competing discourses on socio-economics and education as sites of struggle for meaning and ideological supremacy, but there are also institutional and structural practices as well. These practices shape what is possible, for whom, and under what conditions, and invoke such considerations as uneven 'access' to means. Consequently, historical legacy, embodiments and materialities of injustice, and neoliberal governmentality (Foucault, 1991) as 'political evils' (Hayden, 2009; Swanson, 2012) play a significant role in the production and delimitation of possibility and the (un)viability of alternatives for South African youth today.

FROM INDIGNATION TO HOPE: NARRATING POSSIBILITY

I return to Xoliswe's story. I started out by explaining that there have been two seemingly unrelated but interconnected incidents in my recent experience as an academic in South Africa that haunt me. Xoliswe's experience haunts me like Derrida's (1994) ghosts that mark the absence of possibility and the silence created by what cannot be said. Yet, another incident that deeply affected me was that of a student from another faculty, whom I never knew and who never knew me. I will call the student Anele. Anele broke into my office one weekend and was subsequently arrested for theft of my computer equipment and other valuables. I spent the next three weeks dealing with the local South African police and the inner workings of institutional authority and bureaucracy. It was a discombobulating experience that harkened back, to a small degree, to my experiences of the police while I was a university student during the liberation struggle in the 80s and early 90s. The callousness and indifference to human plight is a mark of that experience, although this issue is understandably complex and not easily generalisable.

What was most troubling was learning about Anele without ever having the opportunity to meet him. Anele was placed in police custody after hav-



ing been searched by campus security when he tried to wheel the equipment off campus in a large luggage case. Theft on campus is rife, so the security personnel are always on heightened alert. After three weeks of dealing with police issues, when I was finally asked to come into the police station to collect my equipment, I had to identify the items in the luggage case.

Amongst my own items and computer equipment lay Anele's personal things: his cap, a student card, his student transcript and one or two other personal items. I felt as if I were intruding on his personal space. The fact that this act of theft had been done to me in the first place did not seem to make the inverse right. Moreover, when Anele broke my office window to enter the room, he cut his arm accidentally in the process. My office had stains everywhere from where the blood had dripped from Anele's arm. It was a gruesome sight indeed and a disturbing experience! It was a material representation of symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) on many levels and as a representative of higher education in South Africa, I felt as if I were the symbolic perpetrator.

How had the university and South African community failed Anele, a young South African who seemed to have his whole future ahead of him? How alienated must he have felt to perpetrate this act of theft when the act of going to university in itself is meant to offer the hope of better alternatives? How was Anele's blood left in my office symbolic of the blood of all South African youth who are alienated by educational institutions and the institution of our nation state that has failed them? How might we read from Anele's actions, not the deficit of yet another 'failed citizen' that marks the woes of a developing country in stress, but as an opportunity to challenge the nature of the 'change' set in place by the current 'transformation agenda' that has heralded in a future of mass youth unemployment and struggle? How are Xoliswe and Anele's stories connected via discursive traces of injustice, and how might we work to undo the frames of deficit and despair and replace them with a humanising future of opportunity and hope?

Both Xoliswe and Anele's experiences converge in indifference and alienation, even though each student pursued different options. I wonder if I had not been able to intervene, would Xoliswe have resorted to Anele's actions? How can we begin to understand or have the audacity to preside in judgement over those youth who experience such dire poverty? How do we turn the indignation of poor South African youth into situations that embody and breathe hope? How do we reframe (in)difference? Rather than only eco-

conomic instrumentalities and a pre-authored neoliberal modernist future for our youth, are there not better, more just imperatives for change that we should be seeking in South Africa? How do we, in Freirian terms, stand up and fight with anger *and* with love for our youth today, turning this era into one of possibility rather than one of predetermination? ... I can think of no worthier cause, no greater challenge for us all.

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EDUCATION, WORK AND DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The article seeks to show the importance of education as a driver of a country's economic growth. Production processes are increasingly rooted in "intangible assets" (i.e. ideas). For a country to be successful, it is not simply a question of its citizens being "informed". Nations need to know how to use information and turn it into a productive asset. Technological changes are occurring at unprecedented speed. The same machines are used in most countries and are becoming increasingly affordable worldwide. What will mark the winners from the losers in the future is the ability to use this equipment efficiently. Good professional training is called for. It is indeed a strategic requirement. It is through quality education that people acquire the ability to reason, think and act. Brazil is seriously lagging behind in terms of basic and higher education. Improving the quality of teaching is absolutely crucial. The role of education in driving progress has never been clearer.

KEY WORDS

Labour market; Education; Productivity; Economic growth; Social progress.



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Education, Work and Development

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Just the other day my granddaughter asked:

– Grandpa, how old are you?

– Mariana, I'm from a time before jet airplanes. No television either. Way back, when there were no computers, faxes, Internet or email. Nobody had heard of cell phones.

She looked stupefied and said:

– Grandpa! You must be about 200 years old!

– Well no, Mariana, this has all happened over the past sixty years, and most of it in the last twenty. It just goes to show the amazing speed of change we are witnessing nowadays.

THE SPEED OF CHANGE

We live in an era in which history is quickly gathering pace. It is not the first time that this has happened. Just think of the steam-driven looms invented by James Watt in 1763 and the invention of the electric motor by Werner von Siemens in 1886.

Every time history takes a leap forward, new skills are called for.

Look at what is happening today. New technologies are entering the

world of work at unbelievable speed, opening up countless new opportunities. At the same time, this is creating much uncertainty in the educational system. Schools are being challenged to innovate and adjust to a pace that is out of synch with the slower, more traditional approach to learning.

In today's world of work, there is a growing demand for knowledge, flexibility and versatility. There is also an increasing call for people who can actually think rather than individuals whose heads are crammed with information.

The changes have been colossal. Alan Greenspan, former chairman of the Federal Reserve, wrote an interesting article showing that the GDP has a monetary and physical weight that together reflect the total weight of everything produced by a country. In his view, the GDP monetary value is expanding hugely while the physical weight component is decreasing. Over the past 50 years, America's GDP has quintupled in value (i.e. 500%), while its physical weight has remained virtually constant. Also relevant is that 50 years ago, things such as radio sets and calculators were heavy. Nowadays, thanks to microchips, they are tiny, light and easy to carry. Even cars and planes are proportionally much lighter. Optical fibres have replaced tons of copper in transmission lines. Computerized online financial transactions make the use of tons of paper a thing of the past.

What does all this have to do with education? Well, everything.

The phenomenon noted by Greenspan simply reveals that production is relying increasingly on intangible inputs. In other words, it depends vastly more on ideas and less on muscle and physical strength. Modern industrial production involves a more abstract than concrete approach. The 'abstract' approach is something that is learned in school. It follows that quality education has become a keystone of industrial production.

The ability to think is crucial to today's economy. Modern firms are looking to recruit and retain staff with a range of special attributes: common sense, logical reasoning, an ability to communicate, to continuously learn, to be prepared to work in groups and, of course, to know their own jobs inside out.

Using common sense is vital. The worker who puts defective parts or rotten apples at the bottom of the box in the hope that the customer will not notice is a perfect example of lack of common sense. It's bad for the firm, and it's bad for the worker himself. The latter fails to realize that the true 'owner' of his job is the customer. If the customer is dissatisfied, he will stop

buying from the firm. The firm, in turn, will stop expanding and might not even survive.

This kind of common sense attitude doesn't call for complex knowledge – simply the kind of common sense that comes with a good general education. The modern company expects its employees to show common sense, know their jobs, be committed to their work, and be enthusiastic in everything they do for the firm. All this is the result of education.

The labour market is increasingly demanding. Passing the entrance tests for many companies is more difficult than succeeding in a university entrance examination. Manpower recruiters are looking for staff with a good command of basic knowledge as well as more specific expertise related to the job on offer. What does this really mean? Are employers seeking to employ a Descartes? Do applicants need to be generalists and specialists at the same time? Exactly! Modern companies expect their employees, in addition to being good at their chosen speciality, to have a command of their own language, of mathematics, of general knowledge, and above all, maintain respect for the work ethic.

Is not it enough to merely be 'trained'. It is necessary to be educated in the fullest sense of the word, because the meteoric speed of change makes it vital for workers to study and learn continuously. In other words, this is not simply about training but about education. A diploma is not enough. Workers need to possess the ability to learn. The modern firm is not just seeking people with paper qualifications. It demands appropriate responses from staff who are able and prepared to go on learning.

You may think that competition is ferocious today, but it is not as ferocious as we expect it to become in the coming years! In Brazil, we are sadly lagging behind in terms of competitiveness. Over recent years, the country has fallen from 32nd to 51st position out of a total of 60 countries surveyed by the Swiss IMD (2012). When the various components of competitiveness are disaggregated, it becomes clear that our greatest weakness is the poor quality of our education.

Productive work calls for discipline, diligence, commitment, love of doing a job professionally and competently. All this depends on good quality education.

New technologies are transforming the way we work. And this is just the beginning of a remarkable revolution. Staff need to be highly versatile. The truth is that we have already entered the era of multifunctionality. Take for

example the case of the humble secretary. In the past, all that was required of a secretary was good typing skills and some sense of organization. Today, a secretary needs to master constantly upgraded word processing techniques. She must be able to write cogently; know something about bookkeeping; help to control costs; make travel arrangements; handle sophisticated equipment such as copying machines, faxes and modems; deploy personal communication skills; and know foreign languages, while also possessing a host of other useful skills.

The new world of work will require people to study on an ongoing basis. Traditionally, economic theory divided man's time into two parts: work and leisure. Less work time meant more leisure time and vice versa.

Today, and even more so in the future, that time consists of three parts: work, leisure and learning. The continuing march of the technological revolution requires men and women to devote a large portion of their time to learning and mastering emerging innovations. There is space in this type of world only for those who are able to learn continuously. No law, no trade union, no political party can make an unqualified work force attractive to a modern company.

The world of the future will need staff to comport themselves rather like students with a fulltime interest in everything. This is already happening in various environments. Workplaces and homes are gradually turning into places for continuous study and learning. One thing is certain: Brazilians will be forced to choose between either studying a lot or having little or no work – a choice between having highly developed skills or being condemned to a lifetime of low wages!

In this race, we are already lagging way behind. While our workforce has only seven years of schooling (poor schooling at that), the Asian Tigers provide ten years of good schooling, Japan eleven, and the US and Europe, twelve years.

In Brazil, our educational deficiencies start right at the bottom, at the elementary school level. For this reason, secondary-level vocational schools and even universities are now being obliged to fill in the many gaps in young people's education, a residue of poor schooling at the lower levels.

While this poses serious problems at present, the situation is bound to deteriorate further unless Brazil substantially raises the quality of its education. Labour market forecasts indicate that by 2050 around 60% of workers will be required to perform jobs that do not even exist today. A good

example of this was observed when the US auto industry started growing again after years of declining fortunes. In mid-2013, Ford and General Motors were seeking to recruit engineers to perform tasks that were previously unknown to most of them. The main demand was for people trained in electronics and computer science vital for designing, developing and producing the new vehicle models. If that is the case in the United States, what hope do we have here in Brazil, which is years behind in terms of education, innovation and productivity? Note that the average productivity of a Brazilian worker is a mere 20% of his American counterpart. This is a massive difference!

AIMING AT A MOVING TARGET

A key problem is that while schools are trying to remedy the deficiencies arising from earlier educational levels, they are being challenged to shoot at a moving target. When the required level of training is reached, they discover that technology has moved on, and that the new technologies demand a whole new set of skills. When a country increases its knowledge level by 5%, its competitor might have increased it by 10% or even 20%. The race will be won by companies whose staff are able to produce more, diversify their product range, satisfy demand, gain market share, and increase profits and investment profiles.

Knowledge levels also have wide-reaching effects on employability. Good thinkers are more likely to get a job. Quick learners are more likely to be retained. According to the management expert Peter Drucker, job security these days depends primarily on the ability to learn quickly and to go on learning throughout one's life.

At this point, I wish to digress a little to comment on what seems to be contradictory figures on education and employment in Brazil. Recent statistics have indicated that unemployment rates are lowest among workers with lower levels of educational attainment and highest among those who have graduated from elementary (and even secondary) school. How can this be explained?

This paradox results from two scenarios. Firstly, the economic growth model adopted in Brazil in 2003-12 focused heavily on the unskilled service sector (delivery personnel, domestic servants, construction workers, etc.).



This was a period in which job opportunities for less qualified people expanded substantially.

Secondly, a mismatch exists between the requirements of the employers and the quality of young people leaving secondary school looking for employment. Quite simply, modern technologies and new production and marketing methods demand the kind and level of skills that have not been taught in secondary school. To a great extent this reflects the backwardness of our schools. The upshot is that we are faced with school-leavers with no proper job qualifications and a mass of firms which are unable to recruit staff who meet required standards. Bridging this veritable abyss between school and work is an enormous challenge. It is a frantic race against time.

There are two important features of this race: the starting point and the speed of learning. Robert Foegel found as long ago as 1850, that 90% of Americans knew how to read and write (Foegel, 2002). Subsequently I unearthed the fact that in that same year, 1850, 90% of the Brazilian population were illiterate. Only recently was a law approved in Brazil requiring parents to enrol their children in school from the age of four. In the United States, this law was passed in 1650! (Tocqueville, 1969). Moreover, while the starting point of education is of great importance, the actual speed of learning aimed at closing the gap is more crucial. In this respect, the US has been faster than Brazil: they have invested much more in education than we have over the last 150 years and, even so, are being overtaken by South Korea, Singapore and Finland in the PISA tests.

There is no doubt that for a company to have a competitive advantage, it needs a workforce that has the ability to learn. Machines have become relatively cheap, accessible and “smart”. What makes a significant difference is the people who operate these machines.

I once asked the Indian Minister of Planning: Why does your country excel in information technology when computers are equally affordable and accessible all over the world? His answer was: We owe our success to three “e”s: English, engineering and education!

EDUCATION AND PRODUCTIVITY

It is increasingly clear that education only makes a difference in productivity and personal achievement when it is of good quality. This largely explains why good employees from good secondary schools earn more than graduates from



poor quality universities and other higher education institutions. Low quality education is of little benefit to anyone. Uneducated workers earn low pay, do not produce, do not innovate and do not generate profits. Hence, firms do not develop, make no profit and fail to prosper. At the other end of the spectrum, well-educated staff collaborate with the company in the process of innovation, the good use of inputs and the reduction of waste – all essential for productivity and competitiveness and, ultimately, for the country's long term growth.

Examples from history show that countries that have gone through severe crises have managed to recover by way of good education. Look what happened with Europe and Japan after World War II! Look at what happened in the United States after the recession of the 1930s! Think about it!

The 1929 crash had devastating effects on the US. Wealth turned to dust overnight. Industrial production fell by 50% and international trade shrank 70%. Over five thousand banks failed. With the advent of a merciless drought in the 1930s, crops failed completely. Unemployment soared to around 25%.

In order to provide some form of occupation for millions of people left with nothing to do, the US government, regardless of the huge budget cuts, decided to expand public libraries to make space for the unemployed. This was done. The book collections were vastly upgraded, the number of physical facilities increased and opening hours were extended. At the same time, mobile libraries were put on the road to meet the needs of readers in the smaller towns and rural areas.

The result of this initiative was very, very important. For nearly ten years, millions of unemployed people took to reading. The outcome was as can be expected: in the midst of disaster and misery, the United States enriched its most precious asset – human capital – and was thus in a better position to face the challenges of renewed growth.

We can see the same pattern repeating itself today. Enrolment in American universities increased between 2008 and 2011 in the midst of the major economic downturn. The results will undoubtedly prove to be of strategic value when the US economy starts growing again.

SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED STAFF

In Brazil, the dearth of good quality staff affects all sectors. Two-thirds of industrialists complain of the shortage of such people. The fact is that a



mere 17% of current employees in industry have completed full university courses, while only 43% have completed secondary schooling. It follows that with so few qualified people the prospects for facing the challenges of the 'knowledge society' are pretty bleak.

Just one example. I have a builder friend who in 2012 was engaged in constructing an oil refinery in the northeast. Every month he lost many of his best workers to the main contracting firm – from mechanics and electricians to foremen and engineers – all professional staff that he was unable to replace. The people he was then obliged to employ were of markedly worse quality, which had serious cost implications for the project.

In recent years, this type of "poaching" has become the norm in the labour market. A firm is only able to acquire good staff by stealing from another. In Brazil's important alcohol industry, for example, the shortage of good staff affects 76% of all the firms; in the clothing industry, 75%; in mining, 71%; in the machinery and equipment sector, 70%; in the auto-assembly industry, 67%. The hydroelectric power plant construction sector faces a similar problem. One result is that many firms are having to call experienced former employees out of retirement.¹

Staff shortages also plague the aircraft industry and agri-business sector.² In the oil business, the situation is also critical and is likely to become more so when the vast offshore, deep-water 'pre-sal' deposits begin to be exploited (unless of course nothing is done to improve the supply of qualified personnel in the meantime). Equally worrying is the situation in the country's hotels, where qualified chefs, head waiters, receptionists and others can only be recruited by poaching from competitors. It is clear that the organizers of the 2014 and 2016 sporting events face a major challenge. It will be easier to build and equip hotels than to find adequately trained people to staff them.

In short, the current supply picture is serious. Brazil still has around 1.7 million young people aged 15 to 17 years who are not in school. Some 14 million Brazilians aged 15 or over cannot read or write. Of those who complete elementary school, only half manage to go on to finish secondary school. Worse still, over 2 million secondary school graduates are neither studying

1 The survey was conducted by IBM with over 1500 CEOs of 33 market segments in 60 countries, including Brazil, between September 2009 and January 2010.

2 The lack of manpower also concerns the unskilled sector of the population. Coffee plantations are short of manpower at harvest time. In construction, it is difficult to get labourers. Even the number of domestic servants (maids) is decreasing.

nor working, nor looking for work. In this depressing situation, it is hardly surprising that companies complain of the poor quality of the bulk of our workforce.

THE BRIDGE BETWEEN SCHOOL AND WORK

In addition to the quantitative problem, Brazilian schools (with rare exceptions) are failing to measure up to the qualitative requirements of the world of work. Quality is essential for meeting new demands. This includes the quality of professional know-how, overall mastery of the Portuguese language, text-writing and a good understanding of the basic concepts underlying any activity. When recruiting staff, firms are interested in more than CVs. They seek candidates who demonstrate good potential to assimilate new knowledge, who enjoy ongoing study, who are obsessive readers and, last but not least, those that are infected with the *virus of curiosity*. Firms are well aware that good work and good thinking go hand in hand.

At best, our schools teach students to pass tests. Those that teach thinking are in a minority. The ability to think arises from a student's mastery of the language. I attended a seminar in 2012 jointly organized by the Brazilian and Paulista Academies of Letters that was focused on 'defence' of the Portuguese language. Listening to the various presentations, I was shocked to discover how much the learning of our common language had deteriorated. An increasing number of teachers actually make a point of highlighting the use of distorted and incorrect words and phrases instead of teaching the basic rules of Portuguese. They are of the opinion that expressing oneself correctly is somehow 'elitist', and that writing proper Portuguese is a 'snobbish' activity. Thus, in order to appear as one 'of the people', students are encouraged to turn a blind eye to linguistic rules. Grammar has become politically incorrect. Unfortunately, these teachers mirror, to a large extent, what they have picked up in textbooks distributed by the Ministry of Education.

I need hardly add that this falsely democratic scenario, devoted to propagating language errors, has had a catastrophic result. Some recruiters are now having to put secondary school applicants – and even university graduates – through dictation tests. Just think, dictation! I was taken totally aback when an experienced "head-hunter" told me that out of 30 dictated words, candidates had, on average, got 20 wrong!!!



This disregard for language naturally affects the performance of students in other disciplines. It is impossible for a person to think properly unless he or she can use the oral and written word correctly. An example: in the OAB (Brazilian Bar Association) exams in 2012, 90% of the applicants were failed, the majority because they had no idea of how to express themselves and could not even understand what they were given to read. Inability to think obviously undermines the productivity of the entire workforce and imperils the country's development.

Despite this gloomy picture I still believe that not all is lost. I am, for example, encouraged by the fact that many Brazilian firms have shown willingness to invest in the preparation of workers (ABTD, 2010). Likewise, municipal governments and other official bodies are training job candidates, as well as people who have already been hired. The S System is increasing the number of vacancies in vocational courses. Workers themselves are taking the initiative to enrol in vocational training and basic education reinforcement classes.

QUANTITY VS. QUALITY

When one talks of improving the quality of education it is often argued that quality and quantity are mutually exclusive. This is absolutely untrue! What if automakers had to sacrifice quality to produce more cars?

In early 2012, I paid a visit to South Korea. While there, I was informed that all children studied with the help of a personal notebook. This did not surprise me because these little devices are cheap and accessible there. But when they told me that all the teachers knew how to perfectly suit this technology's potential to the needs of each age group, I could not help expressing astonishment. How different it is in Brazil, where of the countless computers in thousands of Brazilian public schools, 96% are sitting in the director's office rather than in the classroom.

The most serious problem of Brazilian education in my view is not a shortage of machines, but a shortage of good course programmes and talented individuals who are qualified to manage schools and seriously educate students. These shortcomings are of course eventually reflected in poor labour productivity, low efficiency, exaggerated production costs and the resulting high prices of goods and services throughout the country.



The shortage of qualified staff bloats labour costs. Increasing workers' wages is good for the workers and the economy, but needs to be accompanied by corresponding increases in productivity. This is far from being the case in Brazil. In fact, the fact that our workers' wages are higher than those of some of our competitors is a matter of serious concern.

The average industrial wage in Eastern European countries is lower than in Brazil (all including social contributions). In Estonia, the average industrial wage is US\$ 9.47 per hour, while that of Brazil is around US\$10. In Hungary it is US\$ 8.40; in Taiwan, US\$ 8.36; in Poland, US\$8.01; in Mexico, US\$6.23; in the Philippines, US\$1.90; and in China, US\$1.36.³

It is these countries that Brazil is striving desperately to compete with. Needless to say, the results are not good. Our goods and services are simply not of the quality or price expected by customers. The problem stems, in large part, from our high unit labour costs which, again, are linked to the scarcity of good staff and the precarious situation of the educational system.

International comparisons indicate that Brazil is currently one of the countries that suffers most from low productivity and the lack of manpower.

It is very important to note that the quality of education and productivity levels of the workforce in the countries listed are substantially higher than those of Brazil. In other words, the *unit cost of labour* is much lower than that which is indicated in the above figures.

Rising wages and stagnant productivity drive unit costs up. In the case of Brazil, this situation has had a deleterious impact. Calculated in dollars, the 2012 unit cost was 158% higher than in 2002 – a staggering increase, unknown in emerging and even in the most advanced countries, where the unit costs rose on average by only 15% over the same period.

With ballooning unit costs, companies are left with only two alternatives to balance their books. They start by shifting the additional cost onto the price of goods and services. Next, they are forced to cut their profit margins. The first alternative puts pressure on inflation and the second leads to reduced investment. The Brazil of today is plagued by both evils. We can see how high prices and weak investment are closely related to the labour factor, especially its low productivity, which consequently undermines growth. Recent data show that the share of productivity gains in GDP growth in Brazil is only 25%. The remainder stems from increased employment and incomes

3 Dollars calculated at R\$2.10.



and the population's purchasing power. In South Korea, on the other hand, 75% of GDP growth arises from productivity gains, predominantly supported and driven by the good quality of education, with its beneficial effect on the workforce.

Brazil will not succeed in increasing its income based on increased numbers of people employed. This is because the population is ageing and the proportion of young people is falling. The number of Brazilians of working age (20-64) will shrink from 137 million to 127 million between 2030 and 2050, meaning that future economic growth and income will hinge on improved productivity, which is in turn dependent on better education.

Improving education is undoubtedly one of the main determinants of productivity growth in any country. It is particularly relevant to Brazil, where most of the current workforce has low reasoning capacities, poor mathematical ability and defective command of the language.

To achieve sustained growth, labour productivity would need to increase by at least 3% annually and unit costs would need to be contained to yearly increases not exceeding 1%. This is a monumental challenge. Raising productivity to this level will certainly require the introduction of a plethora of reforms to our institutions as well as, crucially, a substantial improvement in the quality of education at all levels.

EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

As well as responding to the demands of the productive sector, Brazil needs to build generations of good citizens and substantially reduce the immense backwardness in the social areas such as health, justice, security, social welfare and education.

This discrepancy is a major cause for concern. Citizenship can only be properly exercised after a system of rights and duties has been thoroughly incorporated into the fabric of the country. Democracy thrives only where balancing mechanisms exist. We are far from that! For example, in the current Constitution the word *right* appears 76 times, while the word *duty* appears only four. The word *productivity* appears twice and, *efficiency* only once. What can be done with a country that has 76 rights, 4 duties, 2 productivities and only one efficiency? The long road towards striking a bal-

ance in these circumstances depends, to a great extent, on the provision of quality education.

Very few of our schools teach the values that are commonly practiced in the world of work, where the balance between rights and duties is essential. In my view, the schools in the S System are exceptions. I see them cultivating a real *work ethic*. My impression stems from the numerous visits that I have made to these schools over the past 50 years. I have never witnessed SENAI students showing disrespect towards their teachers, damaging facilities, failing to care for tools, or disregarding moral values.

Why is this not the case in other schools? I think that the work ethic is the product of the interface between the S System schools and industrial companies. I have never seen a successful company that is dirty, sloppy and careless with its equipment and tools. The *work ethic* transmitted by SENAI is the result of this interface. In the modern world of work, an ethical approach is just as valuable as cognitive skills.

In short, the quantitative advances made in the field of education and training need to be urgently matched by overall quality improvements, and a more innovative approach to course work and methods for managing and delivering education.

Since the educational process is long term, Brazil needs to find a shortcut. The introduction of corporate initiatives is one. I see in these programmes an opportunity to repair the damage caused by poor quality elementary school education.

We cannot forget that good quality basic education is the key to solving the problem of the low skills of Brazil's workforce. Moreover, it is also the key to generating good jobs and for keeping people employed, enjoying rising incomes and practicing true citizenship. All in all, good education is essential to the general wellbeing of the entire population.

CONCLUSION

In the modern world, education as a driver of the economic growth of nations has increased significantly. Production processes are increasingly based on "intangible goods" (i.e. ideas). For any country to be successful it is not enough for its citizens to be 'informed'. It is vital that they know how to process and use that information as a force for change.



Technological changes occur at meteoric speed, and this calls for workers to possess the ability to understand and adjust. Types of machinery and equipment are becoming standardised and increasingly affordable in most countries. What will make a difference in the future is workers' ability to use this machinery and equipment efficiently. To do this requires good training and, above all, the ability to think.

Vocational training is a strategic part of education. Even more important is the need for students to have a good grasp of their own language and arithmetic. It is the mastery of these skills that helps individuals to reason, think and act.

The gaps in the educational field in Brazil are huge at all levels. Improving the quality of education is crucial to upgrading labour productivity in order to generate economic growth. The role that education can play in the progress of nations was never clearer than it is today.

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YOUTH, WORK AND EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: OPEN FUTURES

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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.



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Youth, Work and Education in Brazil: Open Futures

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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

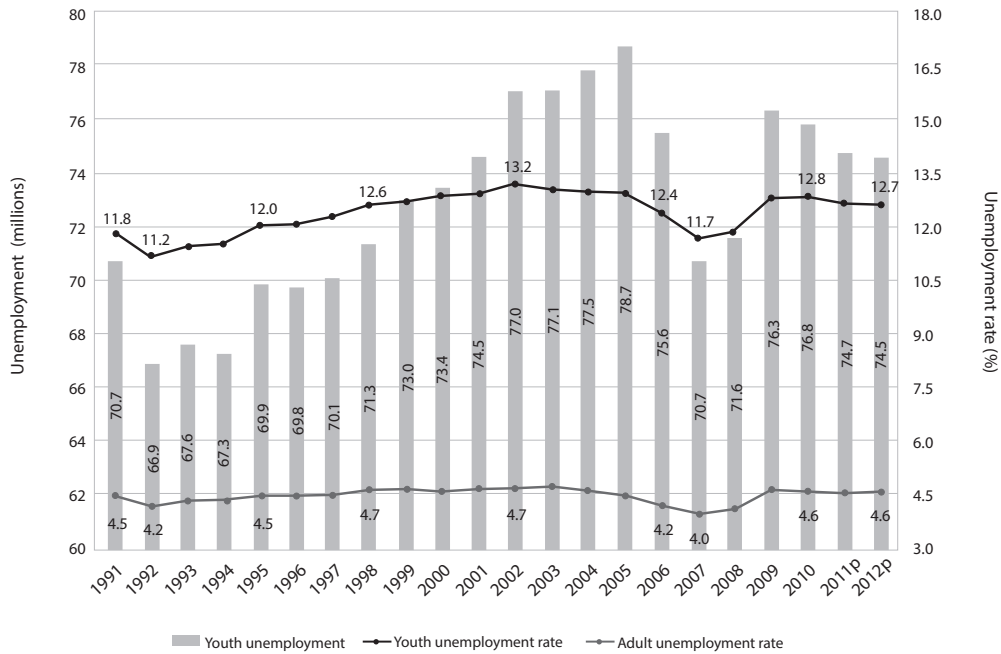
* 2012 are preliminary estimates: CI = confidence interval.

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.

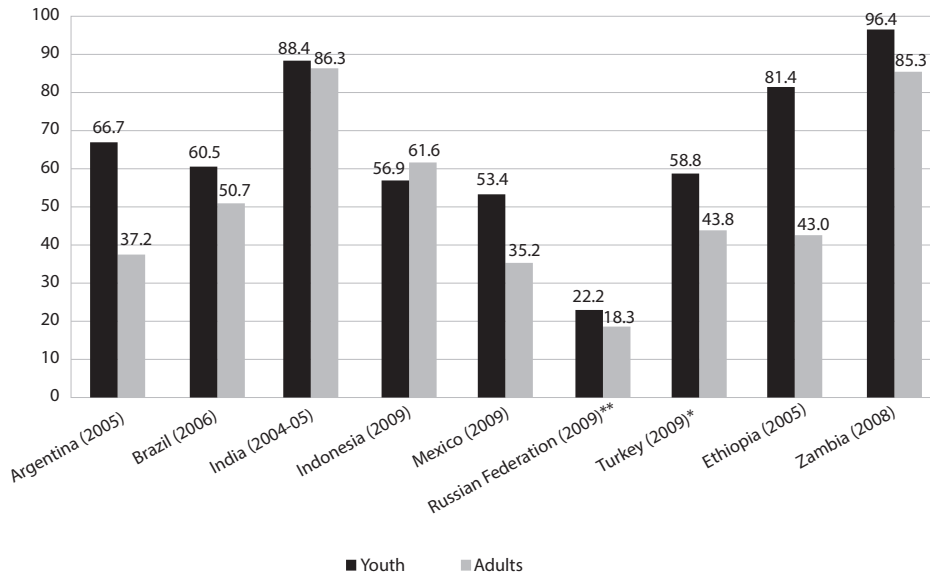
According to the following ILO Report, published in 2013, increased employment in Latin America and the Caribbean helped to improve the social conditions of some 291 million people in the region's jobs market in 2012. Around 19 million were unemployed (down 3 million since 2002) and fewer than 32% were 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).

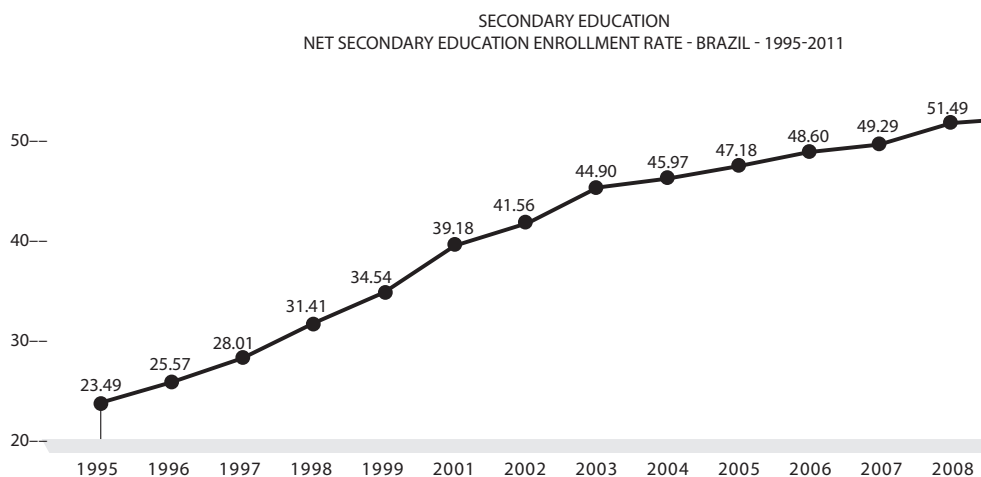
Along the same lines, the Indian economist Amartya Sen, in his thesis on development as a ‘source of freedom’, argues that despite the general acknowledgment that freed-up economic transactions are a principal multiplier of economic growth, the vehement criticisms of this approach also need to be taken 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



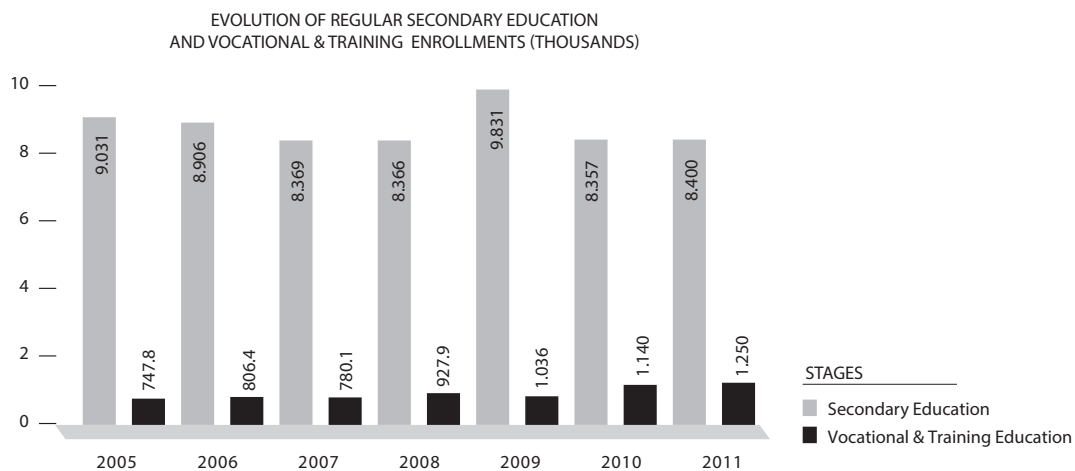
ENSINO MÉDIO
TAXA LÍQUIDA DE MATRÍCULA – 1995-2011
POR UNIDADES DA FEDERAÇÃO E REGIÕES METROPOLITANAS

	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-

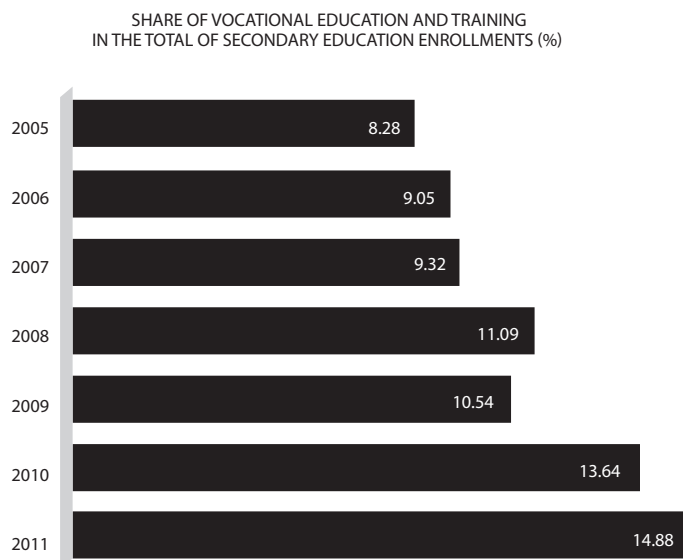


Source: MEC/DEED



	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 salutory 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.

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BRAZIL'S SECONDARY SCHOOL CRISIS AND ITS VICTIMS

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ABSTRACT

Public secondary schools continue to be uninspiring and often disorganized, unsafe places. This article looks specifically at the issue of Brazil's secondary school education, which is showing clear signs of stagnation in terms of coverage and quality. Only half of Brazil's young people aged 15 to 17 attend secondary school and the proportion of students dropping out of school has doubled over the last ten years. Those who neither work nor study account for 24 % of 18 year-olds and 25 % of 20 year-olds. Furthermore, the majority of those who neither study nor work come from households with incomes of under 2 minimum wages. Addressing this issue involves inter alia revising of the curriculum, integrating secondary with vocational education and introducing policies to diversify secondary education.

KEY WORDS

Public policies; Secondary education; Student drop out; Vocational and technical education; Educational evaluation.



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Brazil's Secondary School Crisis and Its Victims

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INTRODUCTION

Brazil continues to face serious problems in terms of child and youth education. These problems are reflected in the figures on educational performance and grade lag produced by national evaluation tests such as SAEB/ Prova Brasil and PISA. While the provision of elementary education has expanded significantly and is now approaching universal coverage – and the most acute educational financing problems (especially in the less developed states of the Federation) have been addressed – access by young people to quality schooling nevertheless remains a major problem.

This article is concerned specifically with Brazilian secondary school education. This is the stage after elementary education which, in contrast to the other education levels, presents clear signs of stagnation from the point of view of coverage and quality. In the period 1999 to 2011, the proportion of students who dropped out of secondary school more than doubled, from 7.4% to 16.2%, only partly explained by the increased numbers entering this level.

As in other countries, the substantial number of young people who are neither working nor studying (up to 24% of 18-year-olds and 25% of 20-year-olds) is of particular concern. In Brazil, this group is mainly concentrated in the poorer sectors of the population: 58.3% of those who do not study or work come from households receiving under two minimum wages.

Despite considerable institutional activism over the last few decades, public policies directed to secondary education have failed to make substantive inroads into this situation. Many of the changes introduced in recent years have had no impact on classroom reality. Recent studies show that public secondary schools continue to be uninspiring and often disorganised, unsafe places (Torres et al., 2013). Teacher absenteeism is very pronounced (IBOPE, 2011) and, coupled with infrastructure problems and excessively crowded school curriculums, the school environment is rendered generally unattractive, frequently engendering among students a perception that school makes no sense and “serves no purpose whatsoever” (Torres et al., 2013, p. 112).

This dire situation is, however, considered normal by some public managers. The Federal Government, for example, possesses no far-reaching plan for reforming this level of education, seeking rather to focus its most recent investments on short-term ‘vocational’ courses (PRONATEC) which, although considered somewhat important in terms of access to the job market, are run separately from the formal education system. As a result, middle-income families tend to turn their backs on the public school system whenever they can. Meanwhile, in areas of greatest poverty, secondary schools become a magnet for a range of negative behaviours, including drug-trafficking in the more extreme cases.

This article first describes key aspects of Brazil’s educational policies, and is followed by a discussion on the development of schooling in this country and educational inequality among young people attending secondary school. The main indicators referring to school infrastructure are then addressed and, finally, a brief conclusion summarizes the salient points of the current debate on Brazil’s secondary education crisis.

GENERAL ASPECTS OF EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

Social policies and education in Brazil have always followed a decentralised model, with the states and municipalities playing a key role in the provision of social services as a whole. The federative social policy model continued over many years and was consolidated in the 1988 Constitution, which established the principle of decentralisation in the provision of social services in general (including education), assigning a markedly more important role to the municipal governments than previously (Arretche, 2009).



Despite the 1988 constitutional ruling to decentralise educational policy, the Federal Government has nevertheless undertaken a formal, coordinating role in this policy, producing a model which is simultaneously decentralised in its execution but monitored at the federal level. The main instrument for this was the establishment of the Fund for Elementary Education Development and for Enhancing the Value of the Teaching Profession (FUNDEF), by constitutional amendment. This fund, aimed at the elementary education sector, specified mandatory spending by states and municipalities on education, as provided for in the 1988 Constitution.

The criteria included the allocation of state and municipal resources, obligatorily earmarked for elementary education, according to the number of students enrolled in each education system. The policy defined national expenditure benchmarks per student and teacher remuneration, and induced federal transfers to poorer states and municipalities. The policy also involved establishing an information system managed by INEP (the National Institute for Educational Research), using the School Census to generate the data required for determining the annual distribution of resources between states and municipalities (Gomes, 2008).¹

While from the point of view of expanding and universalising access to elementary education FUNDEF can be considered a success, serious problems nevertheless persist in terms of quality, as shown by the figures for educational performance and grade lag reflected in the average scores obtained by students in the national evaluation tests such as PISA and the Prova Brazil (Veloso, 2011).

Despite major disagreements in Congress at the time over the proposed FUNDEF (Gomes, 2008), this new generation of policies based on the 1988 Constitution, the LDB/1996 and FUNDEF/1997 produced a policy model consisting of three main pillars (Veloso, 2011) as follows:

DECENTRALIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION: At present, pre-school education is the responsibility of municipalities; elementary education is administered jointly by the states and municipalities; and the states are in charge of secondary education;²

¹ The evaluation systems SAEB (1995) and ENEM (1998) focused specifically on primary and secondary education.

² This division of attributions was established in the LDB and consolidated by the constitutional amendment which created the FUNDEF.



FUNDING CRITERIA DEFINED BY THE FEDERATION: Budgetary allocations for each level of government (states and municipalities), with resource allocation based on student enrolment figures;

CENTRALIZED EVALUATION: For the comparative assessment of educational provision in the separate states, and of school networks and schools.

Despite key differences in emphasis and approach between the Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Lula governments, this macro-institutional framework, consolidated in the 1990s, was retained throughout the following decade.³ Although the educational levels covered by constitutional funds were expanded with the introduction of the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and Enhancement of Education Professionals (FUNDEB), this process did not modify the three-point scheme outlined above.

Moreover, despite the controversy surrounding the evaluation system, the instruments employed for assessing the quality of education were somewhat strengthened. The Basic Education Evaluation System (SAEB) was expanded in 2005 to cover assessment of the 4th through the 8th grades in all the public schools. The SAEB monitoring system continued to be applied in the secondary (public and private) as well as elementary schools, with questionnaires responded to by teachers, parents and students aimed at producing a historical series of the factors associated with learning. The Basic Education Development Index (IDEB), a synthetic indicator monitoring system, was also introduced, while despite undergoing major changes since 2009, the National Secondary Education Test (ENEM), continued to be applied.

By 2010, however, the so-called 'basic education' triptych (pre-school, elementary school and secondary school) had fallen far short of providing universal coverage. According to the PNAD 2009, only elementary education presented a net enrolment rate that came close to universal provision. Meanwhile, the net enrolment rate (around 50%) at the pre-school and secondary levels was far from satisfactory.⁴

Another important aspect of educational policy in Brazil is the existence of private schooling for students from the higher income groups. Basically, private schools are used by better-off families who have rejected the public educational system, particularly in the metropolitan areas. The private sec-

3 Key differences, however, exist at the execution level.

4 PNAD detailed data is available later in the body of this article.



tor is especially strong at the pre-school and higher education stages. Although this is not yet the case at the elementary and secondary levels, private elementary and secondary education has, according to the School Census, increased substantially over the past five years. Meanwhile, the boom in private higher education can be explained by the introduction of new federal initiatives such as PROUNI and the student credit programmes, which provide subsidies for lower-income students graduating from the public secondary schools to enter higher education.⁵

INEQUALITY OF ACCESS TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

In view of the substantial and growing amount of education-related statistical information currently available in Brazil, there is a wide range of sources supplying data on the distribution of enrolments, characteristics of schools and teachers (taken, for example, from the School Census) and a wealth of information on educational performance at the different levels. Given the more limited objectives of this article, we will not tender a comprehensive description and analysis of all of Brazil's statistical data on education. Our focus is, rather, on identifying and working with selected sources and indicators that provide an adequate description of recent developments in secondary education.

Especially worthy of note is the data emerging from the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) which provides a detailed picture of the socio-demographic characteristics of young people (students or not). Since the PNAD provides no details of the actual extent of educational performance, useful complementary data from the SAEB test was also analysed.

EVOLUTION OF THE OVERALL EDUCATIONAL SITUATION IN BRAZIL

According to the PNAD, the number of students in Brazil increased substantially between 1999 and 2011, from 50.4 million in 1999 to 55.5 million in 2011. The massive number of students in Brazil, exceeding the population of

5 These programmes are not discussed in the present paper.



a country such as Spain, gives an indication of the major role that education plays in the life of our country. Given that education is increasingly viewed as vital for economic and social development, it is worth pointing out that one in four Brazilians are students, with 94.4% of children and adolescents aged from 6 to 17 attending some type of school.

This increase in the number of students in absolute terms has not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the actual Brazilian student population. While in 1999 students accounted for 31.4% of the total population, by 2011 the proportion had fallen to 28.5%. It should be noted, however that this does not necessarily reflect a worsening of educational conditions. Rather, it is the result of a number of different factors such as changes in the age structure of the population and improvements in the educational system flow.

Available evidence suggests that the flow has in fact improved, with an increase in the proportion of students actually attending classes at the grade levels most appropriate to their age range. This can be seen by examining the net enrolment rate, which reveals to what extent individuals of school age are attending school and which students are studying at the right level for their age. Based on this data, it is possible to detect improvements in secondary school coverage, as well as the amount of persistent grade lag (i.e. students in lower than appropriate grades) and drop-out rates.

Table 1 below indicates the number of students in Brazil according to age and education levels. Of particular note are the students in the correct grades according to their age level – i.e. nurseries and pre-school education for children up to 5 years of age, elementary education for children between six and 14 years old, secondary school for 15 to 17 year olds and higher education for young people in the 18 to 24 age bracket.

Between 1999 and 2011 the number of children up to 5 years old enrolled in school increased substantially. The total of children in nurseries (crèches), pre-school or elementary education increased from 4.2 million (23.3% of the total number in this age range) to 6.6 million (40.7%), at a time when the total number of children in the Brazilian population in this particular age bracket declined from around 18 million to just over 16 million.⁶

6 Over the next few years, the falling birth rate in Brazil, indicating 1.9 children per woman in 2010, according to the 2010 Census (below the replenishment rate) will affect the number of children entering pre-school. This is undoubtedly a major opportunity to increase coverage rates, even in the event that no new facilities are built to accommodate the pre-school intake.

TABLE 1 – SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BY AGE AND EDUCATION LEVELS. BRAZIL, 1999 AND 2011

	UP TO 5 YEARS	6 TO 14	15 TO 17 YEARS	18 TO 24	25 TO 30 YEARS	31 YEARS AND OVER	TOTAL
1999							
Nursery and Pre-school	4,072,000 22.7%	2,559,000 8.7%	- 0.0%	- 0.0%	- 0.0%	- 0.0%	6,632,000 4.1%
Literacy classes and elementary education	97,000 0.5%	24,873,000 84.9%	4,516,000 43.5%	1,766,000 8.4%	273,000 1.8%	281,000 0.4%	31,809,000 19.8%
Secondary school	- 0.0%	117,000 0.4%	3,400,000 32.7%	2,913,000 13.9%	322,000 2.2%	244,000 0.4%	6,997,000 4.4%
Undergraduate and postgraduate education	- 0.0%	- 0.0%	11,000 0.1%	1,567,000 7.5%	544,000 3.7%	604,000 0.9%	2,728,000 1.7%
Youths and adults – elementary education	- 0.0%	50,000 0.2%	148,000 1.4%	239,000 1.1%	145,000 1.0%	260,000 0.4%	844,000 0.5%
Youth and adult education - average	- 0.0%	- 0.0%	31,000 0.3%	217,000 1.0%	103,000 0.7%	177,000 0.3%	529,000 0.3%
Individuals out of school	13,754,000 76.7%	1,680,000 5.7%	2,230,000 21.5%	13,868,000 66.1%	13,409,000 90.1%	64,960,000 97.2%	109,904,000 68.6%
Total	17,924,000 100.0%	29,294,000 100.0%	10,385,000 100.0%	20,970,000 100.0%	14,882,000 100.0%	66,813,000 100.0%	160,271,000 100.0%
2011							
Nursery and Pre-school	5,930,000 36.6%	879,000 3.0%	- 0.0%	- 0.0%	- 0.0%	- 0.0%	6,810,000 3.5%
Literacy classes and elementary education	658,000 4.1%	27,382,000 93.6%	3,114,000 29.5%	527,000 2.4%	116,000 0.6%	312,000 0.3%	32,113,000 16.5%
Secondary school	- 0.0%	456,000 1.6%	5,459,000 51.8%	2,223,000 9.9%	246,000 1.3%	309,000 0.3%	8,697,000 4.5%
Undergraduate and postgraduate education	- 0.0%	- 0.0%	86,000 0.8%	3,331,000 14.9%	1,529,000 7.8%	1,699,000 1.8%	6,646,000 3.4%
Youths and adults – elementary education	- 0.0%	11,000 0.0%	143,000 1.4%	105,000 0.5%	87,000 0.4%	373,000 0.4%	721,000 0.4%
Youth and adult education - average	- 0.0%	- 0.0%	17,000 0.2%	178,000 0.8%	96,000 0.5%	238,000 0.2%	531,000 0.3%
Individuals out of school	9,594,000 59.3%	527,000 1.8%	1,722,000 16.3%	16,002,000 71.5%	17,500,000 89.4%	93,937,000 97.0%	139,285,000 71.5%
Total	16,183,000 100.0%	29,258,000 100.0%	10,543,000 100.0%	22,369,000 100.0%	19,577,000 100.0%	96,872,000 100.0%	194,804,000 100.0%

Source: IBGE, Brazilian Household Survey (PNAD), 1999 and 2011.



In the 6 to 14 age range the school-age population stabilised and enrolments increased. In 1999, 94.3% of individuals were in education, with 84.9% attending elementary school or literacy classes. In 2011, 98.2% of the total in this age range were studying, with 93.6% in elementary school. In other words, provision of elementary education increased in both absolute and relative terms, although it is worth noting that the rates were already relatively high in 1999 compared with the other education levels. Studies such as those done by Gouveia et al. (2009) suggest that the virtually universal coverage at this level in 1999 was probably the result of the establishment of FUNDEF in 1996.

In the decade analysed, the absolute number of individuals in the 15 to 17 age range practically stagnated (just over 10 million adolescents were in this age range in both years) but there was some increase in school attendance during this period, from 78.5% to 83.7%. In 1999, 43.5% of these adolescents were still attending elementary school and 32.7% secondary school; in 2011, 29.5% were in elementary school and 51.8% in secondary school. This inversion shows the reduction in the high level of grade lag and the expansion of net enrolments at the secondary level, even though the figures remained far from ideal. A closer look at the PNAD historic series also shows that the improvement in the net enrolment rate occurred especially between 1999 and 2005, but virtually stagnated thereafter.⁷

In 2011, 3.1 million adolescents aged from 15 to 17 were attending elementary school (29.5%), while around 1.7 million of similar age had already dropped out of school altogether (16.3%). These figures reveal the dramatic situation of youth education in Brazil. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that 2.2 million young people between the ages of 18 and 24 were still attempting to complete their secondary school education. The desire to complete this level of education reflects the perception that a secondary school diploma opens doors to the labour market (Torres et al., 2013).

Given the establishment of FUNDEF in 1997, which provided a framework for change in elementary education policies and the major burst of activity by the Government in the secondary education area (with PROMED in 1999 and FUNDEB in 2006), it can be inferred that in terms of increased coverage, the results of the policies directed towards elementary education were more successful than those related to secondary education.⁸

7 A detailed description of all the developments over the years is not undertaken here, since the basic aim is to provide a more general description of the levels observed and the main differences.

8 In the final section, we look at the set of institutional innovations in the field of secondary education that have been introduced over the last few decades.

The majority of the Brazilian population between 18 and 24 are non-students: 66.1% in 1999 and 71.5% in 2011. The very large numbers of students who drop out of education at 18 suggest that most Brazilian families regard this age as a transitional point between student life and starting work. These data are summarised in Chart 1 below.

The following chart shows various worrying aspects of Brazilian secondary education. The data indicate that the 15-year-old age band only partially represents the transition between elementary and secondary levels, given that a large cohort of youths of that age are still attending elementary school. As mentioned above, just over 3 million adolescents between 15 and 17 years of age attend elementary school, or almost 30% of the adolescents in this age band. A minority of individuals in this age group, 659,000 young people (6.2%), consists of individuals who have dropped out of school and are working. This is a surprisingly lower number than the more than 1 million adolescents who neither work nor study.

The age of legal majority (18) symbolises, to a certain extent, the end of school life, regardless of whether young people have graduated from secondary school or not. Even the substantial increase in higher education witnessed in Brazil in recent years has not led to an increase in school attendance. In fact, the increase in the proportion of young people not studying ('non-students') can be partly attributed to the improvement in the school flow, with the growth in the numbers completing their basic education at the 'ideal' age of 17. It is also possible that the spurt of economic growth over the past decade has increased employment opportunities for this age group in a more attractive job market than hitherto. However, data to endorse this hypothesis is not available.

In 1999, 8.4% of those between 18 and 24 were enrolled in elementary education, 13.9% in secondary school and 7.5% in universities. The proportion of youths in elementary education was higher than the number graduating, a fact which clearly and most perversely reflected the persistence of grade lag. In 2011, this picture changed significantly, with 2.4% of youths aged 18 to 24 attending elementary school, 9.9% secondary school and 14.9% in higher education. The decline in grade lag may be seen, therefore, not only in the light of the reduction of the numbers attending elementary school but also as a result of the fact that in 2011, the increased number of students in this age range was represented by individuals attending university. The growth in the cohort of undergraduate students is also, evidently, closely linked to the significantly larger number of places made available in higher education during the period.



CHART 1 – WORK AND STUDY (INDIVIDUALS AGED BETWEEN 11 AND 24 YEARS).
BRAZIL, 2011, IN PERCENTAGE

AGE	Total population	Neither work nor study	Work but do not study	Work and study regular elementary school)	Work and study (regular high school)	Work and study (other courses)	Do not work but study (regular elementary school)	Do not work but study (regular high school)	Do not work but study (other courses)
11	3574384	1,07	0,07	3,20	0,00	0,00	95,66	0,00	0,00
12	3445997	1,05	0,07	3,88	0,00	0,00	94,99	0,00	0,00
13	3405084	1,57	0,34	6,56	0,10	0,03	90,17	1,17	0,06
14	3580730	2,82	0,55	9,15	1,11	0,01	75,69	10,44	0,23
15	3563922	6,01	2,06	6,92	5,47	0,30	39,69	38,82	0,73
16	3594473	9,19	5,09	5,99	12,08	0,51	20,67	45,45	1,03
17	3385121	15,31	11,90	4,48	14,45	1,65	10,17	39,12	2,92
18	3268956	24,59	26,67	2,29	11,37	4,50	3,81	19,75	7,02
19	3126713	24,22	38,98	1,39	6,64	8,27	2,03	9,38	9,09
20	3069457	25,00	43,30	0,79	4,05	11,78	1,79	3,95	9,34
21	3114623	24,05	48,90	0,69	2,82	11,54	1,01	2,91	8,08
22	3250076	24,32	54,03	0,53	2,01	9,90	0,61	1,80	6,80
23	3294930	24,45	57,29	0,32	1,54	9,16	0,49	1,23	5,52
24	3244534	24,39	60,15	0,29	1,40	8,25	0,49	0,65	4,38

Source: IBGE, Brazilian Household Survey (PNAD), 2011.

In the older age groups, the proportion of individuals enrolled in supplementary courses (Youth and Adult Education-EJA) also increased. There was a decline in the number of enrolments in these courses at elementary level (from 845,000 to 721,000), whereas enrolments in the EJA at secondary level actually stabilised. The decrease of students enrolled in EJA (elementary level) may have been due to the substantial increase in regular elementary education coverage (which only occurred partially in the case of secondary education) and the reduction in grade lag at that level. The key difference to be noted between the two years, which strengthens the above hypothesis, is the fact that in 1999 the cohort of youths enrolled in EJA at the elementary

level involved virtually all age levels, while in 2009 over half were in the higher age bracket (30 and over).⁹

ENROLMENT ACCORDING TO INCOME GROUPS

considering the evolution of enrolment rates within each income group, it is noteworthy that net enrolment rates among 15 to 17-year-olds grew substantially in all income groups.¹⁰ This data is summarised in Chart 2.

The increase in school attendance in the 15 to 17 age range in the decade in question was most pronounced in the lower income groups. School attendance in households with up to two minimum wages increased from 70.4% to 79.5%. The evolution in other income groups was much lower (a maximum of around +3%). This meant that the expansion of school enrolments of adolescents between 15 and 17 was mainly due to students from lower income households. However, it is worth assessing the distribution of the students on the basis of the different schooling levels to determine whether this increase in enrolment actually meant a reduction of grade lag and therefore a better match between age and school grade.

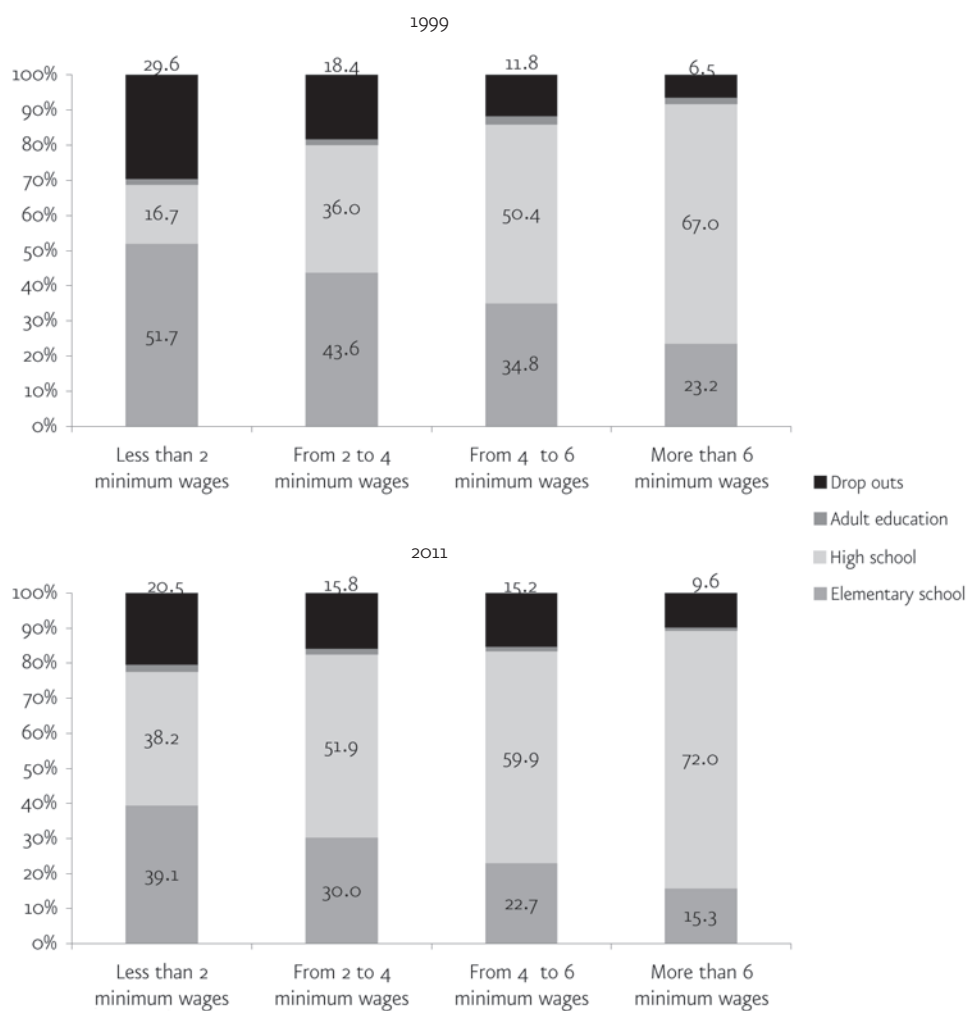
Considering the net enrolment rate at the secondary level, the gap between income levels continued to be very significant in 2011, notwithstanding the fact that they were lower than 1999. During the period, grade lag declined at all income levels, particularly in the income group receiving up to two minimum wages, where secondary school attendance increased from 16.7% to 38.2%. Note that in spite of this improvement, the attendance by 15 to 17-year-old students at secondary schools is still very low. This is a fairly large segment of the population, representing around 3.5 million adolescents in 2011 (35% of the population in this age group).

9 The EJA (secondary level) declined in absolute and relative terms in the 15 to 24 age range. This fact would appear to contradict the expectation that the low expansion of regular secondary school education would continue on account of the EJA, which is seen as a quicker way of securing the final school-leavers' diploma. In fact, the number of students doing the EJA (secondary level) increased, especially in the over 25 age range. In other words, the hypothesis above would only hold true in the case of youths dropping out of school and returning to their studies at a later stage in life. Worth noting, however, is the fact that in the older age ranges, the absolute number of enrolments at the regular secondary education level is higher than that of those enrolled in the EJA.

10 The income groups considered here refer to the minimum wage (MW) as at 2009. The 1999 data were inflated and the 2011 deflated in order to allow for comparison.



CHART 2 – SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ACCORDING TO EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AND INCOME GROUP.
15 TO 17-YEAR-OLDS, BRAZIL, 1999 AND 2011



Source: IBGE, Brazilian Household Survey (PNAD), 1999 and 2011.
[Obs: Minimum wages of 2009]

Despite the low level of secondary school coverage, only a minority of young people from low-income households dropped out of school (20.5%), most of whom had been held back at elementary level (39.1%). These results indicate that a possible future expansion of secondary education will clearly involve

incorporating students from the poorer sectors of the population and improvement in school flow at elementary level.

The figures are clearly better for the higher social classes and worse for groups lower down the social scale, even though the growth rates are more evident among the latter. Educational inequalities in Brazil, even without considering aspects of performance at school, continue to be pronounced. Particular attention needs to be paid to the large number of adolescents between 15 and 17 who were not in formal education either in 1999 or in 2011, especially when compared to the previous age group. In 1999, 21.4% of 15 to 17-year-olds were not in school, although by 2011 this proportion had dropped to 16.3%. In addition, between 1999 and 2011, with the exception of individuals from the lower social level, there was no significant decline in the dropout rate among students from the income groups receiving over two minimum wages. On the contrary, the number of young people not attending school from income groups with over four minimum wages actually increased.

A significant percentage of 15 to 17-year-olds not attending school, even in the higher income ranges, suggests that the issue of secondary education coverage is not only linked to students' dropping out in order to start generating income. Nor does it appear to be linked to shortcomings in public education supply, since the group with over six minimum wage salaries (9.6% of young people out of school) is served predominantly by the private education system. As other studies suggest (Torres et al., 2013), it is possible that a number of factors dealing with the very logic of Brazilian secondary school education encourage students to drop out.

In short, it could be argued that the main advances in adolescent education have taken place in the lower income levels. However, given the substantial inequalities, the levels observed are still highly problematic. In the other social strata, the advances were always small, as if a "limit to educational attainment" existed. Moreover, in the 15 to 17-year-old age group, drop-out and grade lag problems were more evident in all the income ranges, indicating that a serious problem exists at the national level.

15 TO 17 YEAR-OLD DROPOUTS

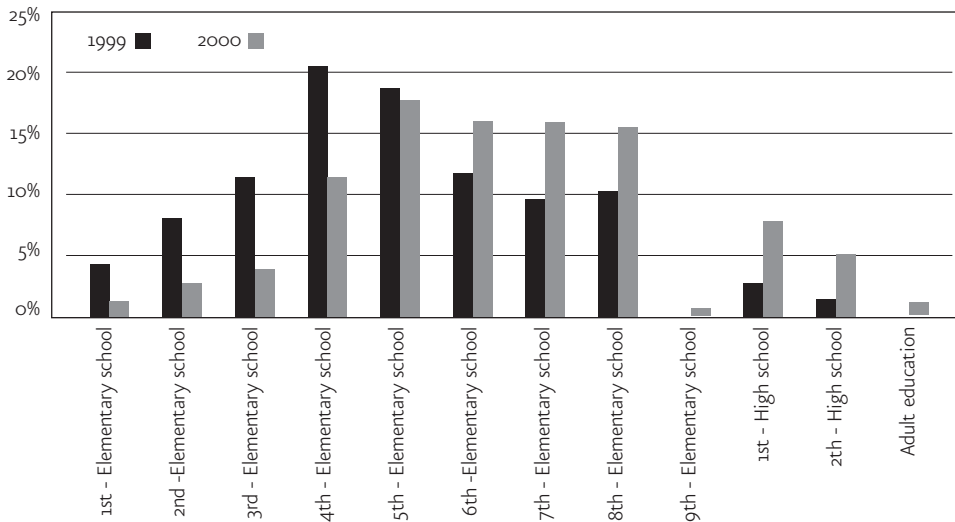
Given the high dropout rates, it is worth exploring at what point the highest rates occur. During the period under study, in addition to the decline in the absolute and relative number of 15 to 17 year olds not in school (from



2.2 million to 1.7 million or 21.5% and 16.3% respectively), a further major change took place: a general downward trend in dropout rates in the early grades of elementary school and an increase in the final grades, as well as at the secondary school level. In 1999, 63.6% of students dropped out of school between the first and fifth grade of elementary school. However, by 2011, this had fallen to 28.9%, while 70.2% dropped out between the 7th grade and secondary school (See Chart 3 for details).

While in 1999 the peak dropout rate by 15 to 17-year-olds occurred in the fourth grade of elementary education, a decade later the dropout rate was higher in the seventh and eighth grades (18.9% and 17.9% respectively). In other words, according to the PNAD 2011, 54.1% dropped out of school during the ‘second cycle’ of elementary education. It follows that, in national terms, we should regard this cycle as a possible source of greater non-attendance and grade lag at the secondary level.¹¹

CHART 3 – LAST GRADE CONCLUDED BY 15 TO 17 YEAR-OLD DROPOUTS. BRAZIL, 1999 AND 2011



Source: IBGE, Brazilian Household Survey (PNAD), 1999 and 2011.

[Obs: Given the change in the number of years of elementary education (from 8 to 9 years), the two series are not strictly compatible]

11 Given this information, the net enrolment rates above 90% need to be relativised for secondary education. Since they are calculated using a very broad age range (6-14 years), they probably fail to reveal the much lower enrolment rates at the very end of the primary school stage.

Regardless of the fact that dropouts have decreased somewhat in the first cycle of elementary education, indicating a degree of success of educational policies at that level, it is nevertheless of great concern that at the end of the elementary school cycle, as well as at the secondary level, a substantial increase in the dropout rate has occurred. At this stage, students are a little older and tend to have more choices to attend school or not. In fact, the data show that a major problem exists right at the end of the elementary cycle. This is demonstrated by both the dropout rate at that point and the low skill levels of students entering the secondary cycle.¹²

There are students at the secondary level without even the minimal knowledge of mathematics who also encounter difficulties in reading and writing. These students flounder when faced by the average school curriculum, which assumes basic literacy and numeracy levels that should have been achieved during the previous stage. Yet in addition to the serious educational shortcomings students experience at the end of the elementary stage, in secondary school they are also faced with a series of difficulties that have to do with their socioeconomic backgrounds.

A number of studies, such as those by Cratty (2012) and Stratton, O'Toole and Wetzel (2008) provide some understanding of the events that can prevent young people from pursuing their studies. These include work, pregnancy and failure at school. Young people from low income families often have to face material pressures (including becoming parents) and need to start working before they are able to complete their studies. The problem is especially acute among young adolescent girls who become pregnant and must face the additional burden of looking after their own families. One of the most common hypotheses in the literature is that because of poverty, young people must abandon their education in order to start working.

Table 2 contains interesting data on this phenomenon. It shows that the majority of dropouts are in fact individuals who neither study nor work: 38.3% work while 61.7% do not. A further crucial point is that the lower the income, the more likely it is that the individual is not working, an observation which undermines the argument that youngsters dropping out of school do so because they need to earn a living. If this were the main reason, the

12 The poor results obtained by students in the 9th year of education in the *Prova Brasil* is one indicator of this critical situation. A study done by the Victor Civita Foundation in 2012 on elementary education in Brazil focused on the need to establish closer ties with secondary education in order to ensure continuity of the learning and development processes, and to address the substantial gaps in schooling.

numbers of these individuals in the job market would be much higher. This argument is particularly relevant when considering the significant 20% of students aged 15 to 17 who also work.¹³

TABLE 2 – WORK STATUS OF YOUTHS AGED BETWEEN
15 AND 17 NOT IN SCHOOL (BRAZIL, 2011)

	Up to 2 MW	2 to 4 MW	4 to 6 MW	Over 6 MW	TOTAL
ONLY WORKING	168,000 27.1%	180,000 44.3%	85,000 57.3%	46,000 59.9%	480,000 38.3%
NOT STUDYING AND NOT WORKING	451,000 72.9%	227,000 55.7%	63,000 42.7%	31,000 40.1%	773,000 61.7%
TOTAL	619,000 100.0%	407,000 100.0%	149,000 100.0%	77,000 100.0%	1,254,000 100.0%

Source: IBGE, Brazilian Household Survey (PNAD), 2011.
[Obs: MW = minimum wage]

The majority of young people who work are mainly from the middle and higher income groups. Most school dropouts who work are in fact from families who are better-off. In this case, work may have been viewed as a justifiable reason for leaving school since, in all probability, family connections made it easier for the ex-student to obtain a job (a benefit likely to be less accessible to poorer students). Meanwhile, individuals who neither work nor study are more concentrated in the lower income strata. Around 450,000 (58.3%) of those who do not work or study are from families with incomes of under two minimum wages. This is obviously a worrying situation which is bound to reinforce the poverty cycle among such families, since in addition to failing to generate income for the household, the young people in this group are also missing out on an education which might eventually help them join the job market.

Of the non-attendees, 54.1% are males and 45.3% are females. In the lower income range the proportion of females rises to 56%. In other words, despite

¹³ This argument does not mean that this variable is not significant.

the fact that the drop-out phenomenon is generally a “male” preserve, it is a “female” one in poorer households. This calls for greater attention to teenage pregnancy among girls in the lower income brackets.

Table 3 shows that among the females who drop out of school, the proportion who have borne children (34.4%) is high, but not predominant. Moreover, of the approximately 300,000 girls aged between 15 and 17 with offspring, around 200,000 (two thirds) had dropped out. Pregnancy, it appears, often causes girls to drop out, although this does not necessarily mean that it is the main cause. Furthermore, of the non-attending teenage girls who had babies, the vast majority were also among the poorest; but even in their income bracket, it was not the main cause of non-attendance.

Table 4 illustrates the extent of the link between dropping out and having children during adolescence. This applies to females as well as males (who may also have dropped out to support their pregnant partners). The gender differences regarding the status of the families of dropout youngsters are striking – 80.8% of the males are in the “dependent child” category (i.e. still dependent on parents), a proportion which varies little across the various income levels. But it is worth noting the higher proportion of males described in the statistics as the “reference person” (head of household) in the lower income range (9.1%). It follows that having children does not appear to be a good explanation for why young males drop out of school.

TABLE 3 – FEMALES AGED BETWEEN 15 AND 17,
WHO HAVE GIVEN BIRTH AND WHO ARE NOT IN SCHOOL,
BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME (BRAZIL, 2011)

HAVE YOU HAD A LIVE BIRTH?	UP TO 2 MW	2 TO 4 MW	4 TO 6 MW	OVER 6 MW	TOTAL
YES	144,000 41.7%	38,000 25.1%	10,000 19.9%	4,000 18.9%	198,000 34.4%
NO	202,000 58.3%	114,000 74.9%	43,000 80.1%	18,000 81.1%	377,000 65.6%
TOTAL	347,000 100.0%	152,000 100.0%	53,000 100.0%	22,000 100.0%	575,000 100.0%

Source: IBGE, PNAD, 2011.



The females also exhibit another feature. Only 40% are considered “dependent daughters”. This percentage varies greatly, from 30% in the lowest income range to 61% in the highest. Compared to the rates for males, the number of dropout “couples” (35.2%) and “reference persons” (12.4%) are very high, mainly among the poorest. Thus, forming a family would appear to be a very important explanation of why females drop out (and some of them marry older males). Having children and establishing a new family unit is not necessarily associated with young girls getting pregnant: 274,000 not attending school formed families, outnumbering the almost 200,000 who had children.

TABLE 4 – FAMILY STATUS OF OUT OF SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS
AGED BETWEEN 15 AND 17, BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME (BRAZIL, 2011)

SEX	STATUS IN THE HOUSEHOLD	UP TO 2 MW	2 TO 4 MW	4 TO 6 MW	OVER 6 MW	TOTAL
Male	Reference person	9.1%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.4%
	Spouse	0.8%	0.5%	0.7%	0.0%	0.6%
	Dependent son	78.4%	81.1%	82.5%	88.6%	80.8%
	Other	11.7%	16.4%	16.8%	11.4%	14.2%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Female	Reference person	17.7%	3.8%	7.7%	0.0%	12.4%
	Spouse	44.5%	23.8%	17.5%	11.8%	35.2%
	Dependent daughter	30.8%	52.3%	59.0%	60.9%	40.3%
	Other	7.1%	20.1%	15.8%	27.3%	12.1%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: IBGE, PNAD, 2011.

In sum, the data show (as suggested in the literature) that both premature working and pregnancy in adolescence are linked in some way to dropping out, but these circumstances are not necessarily the exclusive or predominant causes of this phenomenon.

INEQUALITIES IN STUDENT PERFORMANCE

This section aims to assess whether the expansion of secondary school coverage would result in an improvement in student performance indicators. To determine this, we examined indicators linked to third year students' performance in the SAEB secondary school Portuguese and mathematics tests for 1999 and 2011. For the latter period, SAEB results are published jointly with the results of the IDEB Basic Education Development Index, but this does not preclude their comparison. Taking into account the recent changes in the Brazilian public education system, it was decided to present the figures for the public schools separately from those of the private network.

Table 5 shows the decline in the average proficiency of public school students in the Portuguese tests between 1999 and 2005. Post-2005, the performance indicator increased. Over the entire period, however, the indicator (which by any criterion was already very low) virtually stagnated, increasing only marginally from 257.01 in 1999 to 261.38 in 2011. In mathematics, the level remained stable throughout the period. This result can be interpreted as clear evidence of the difficulties of the education system in combining increased coverage with better quality of content delivery.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the private schools presented stable results in Portuguese (around 310 points) and mathematics (around 330 points).

TABLE 5 – AVERAGE PROFICIENCY OF THIRD YEAR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE SAEB TESTS IN MATHEMATICS AND PORTUGUESE, BRAZIL (1999 AND 2011)

		1999	2005	2007	2009	2011
MATHEMATICS	Public school	268.15	260.81	263.66	265.92	265.38
	Private school	329.97	333.31	329.55	329.29	332.89
PORTUGUESE	Public school	257.01	249.27	254.07	262.16	261.38
	Private school	306.06	306.88	306.32	310.16	312.75

Source: Brazilian Bureau for Education Statistics (INEP), 1999 and 2005.

¹⁴ Much of the expansion of secondary education which took place in the period 1999 to 2005 resulted from the increased number of students doing evening courses (Gouveia et al., 2009).



The IDEB, basically a synthesis of the results of student performance in tests such as the SAEB and Prova Brasil, also contains information about approval rates in the grades under consideration. The Index ranges from zero to 10, calculated on the basis of a standardized average school performance obtained from the results in either the SAEB or *Prova Brasil* Portuguese and mathematics tests, and the so-called school performance index based on the pass rate at a particular stage of education.¹⁵

The National IDEB for the third year of secondary school increased by one tenth for each year that the tests were applied (from 3.4 in 2005 to 3.7 in 2011). In the public schools alone, the index rose from 3.1 in 2005 to 3.4 in 2009, and remained stagnant up to and including 2011. All these results matched or exceeded the Government's projected targets. Since the data in Table 5 indicate relative stagnation in performance levels (except for Portuguese between 2005 and 2011), it can be concluded that the results produced by the IDEB mainly reflect advances in school flow.

From the foregoing it can be inferred that a slight increase occurred in the flow, representing an improvement over the 2005 results. With regard specifically to student performance, this is apparently a recovery from the decline noted between 1999 and 2005, when the expansion of coverage reached its highest levels. However, since the overall performance level has always been low, this rate of evolution is obviously extremely frustrating.

Trends observed in recent years indicate that the development of good quality education systems in Brazil is still largely a goal to be achieved over the long term, given that the 6.0 target planned for 2021 is still a distant dream. It is probable, nevertheless, that the indicators analysed in this section could be influenced by the conditions under which the education systems are operating. This will be explored below.

15 The IDEB calculations are based on the general formula: $Ideb(ji) = N(ji) \times P(ji)$, in which "i" represents the year of the test (SAEB and Prova Brasil); "N(ji)" is the mean proficiency in Portuguese and Mathematics, standardised for an indicator of between 0 and 10, of the students in unit "j"; and, finally, "P(ji)" is a performance indicator based on the pass rate in a given grade of students in unit "j". Further details can be found in the Technical Note on the Basic Education Development Index (available at www.inep.gov.br).

INDICATORS ASSOCIATED WITH EDUCATIONAL
OPERATING CONDITIONS

In an attempt to ascertain whether advances have been made in the operating conditions of education, information was sought on the number of students per class, the number of students per teacher, and the percentage of high school students attending evening classes (night school). Any improvement in these indicators can be interpreted as progress in the operating conditions of the educational system, without of course necessarily reflecting improvements in the coverage and performance indicators discussed above.

Table 6 shows a reduction in the average number of students per class and per teacher nationwide. This improvement can be partly ascribed to improved funding (arising from economic growth and policies such as FUNDEB, which are aimed at this level of education) and a reduction of demographic pressures due to the general decrease in birth rates.¹⁶ The lowest ratios of students per class are currently in the south and centre-west regions of the country, with the highest in the northeast and southeast.

TABLE 6 – RATIO OF STUDENTS PER CLASS
AND STUDENTS PER TEACHER IN BRAZILIAN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

	STUDENTS PER CLASS			STUDENTS PER TEACHER		
	1999	2005	2011	1999	2005	2011
Brazil	40.1	37.4	32.2	22.7	20.2	17.9
North	40.8	37.0	31.1	26.3	25.7	22.9
Northeast	42.4	40.8	33.8	24.3	25.5	20.2
Southeast	40.7	37.8	33.9	23.2	17.9	17.0
South	36.3	32.1	27.3	19.8	16.8	14.8
Centre-West	38.1	34.5	29.9	19.6	19.8	17.2

Source: INEP statistical synopses (prepared by authors).

¹⁶ A further aspect to be considered is the increase in the number of obligatory school subjects.



As in the case of the number of students per class, a substantial decrease in the number of students per teacher can also be observed. Taken together, these indicators show that the rise in secondary school enrolment was accompanied by the increased number of classes on offer and, consequently, by a higher number of teachers recruited throughout the country and/or a significant increase in the latter's workload. In short, the expansion of coverage did not occur within a context of worsening basic operating indicators.

Finally, the proportion of students attending evening classes in Brazilian public schools was examined (Table 7). In 1999, evening students accounted for the majority (60.7%) of secondary school students. This percentage declined to 48.8% in 2005 and 36.8% in 2011. All the regions of the country showed values close to the national average. While the proportion of slightly more than one-third of all secondary school students studying in the evenings can be considered high, there can be no doubt that the drop in numbers over this period was substantial.

The three above-mentioned indicators reveal that notable progress was made in the operational aspects of Brazilian public schools, in parallel with the robust efforts to boost access to secondary education in general. However, these more positive signs do not appear to have had much impact on the performance indicators discussed above. Given the advances made in terms of flow and overall operating conditions, the key remaining question is why the quality indices continue to lag behind. In other words, why does student performance not improve in line with the improvements in educational operating conditions?

	1999	2005	2011
BRAZIL	60.7%	48.8%	36.8%
NORTH	64.8%	54.2%	38.4%
NORTHEAST	58.6%	51.2%	36.6%
SOUTHEAST	62.2%	47.8%	37.8%
SOUTH	57.3%	44.1%	35.2%
CENTRE-WEST	60.0%	47.0%	33.0%

Source: INEP statistical synopses (prepared by authors).

The literature reveals a fairly complex picture of the different ingredients influencing educational performance. It is clear that the operational aspects discussed here are only one of the elements to be taken into consideration. Aspects such as “school environment” (Anderson, 1982; UNESCO, 2008) and “quality of management” (Neubauer et al., 2010), for example, may have deteriorated during the period under study, counteracting the positive effects of the improved operating indicators. The changing social composition of the student body, resulting from the influx of less socioeconomically privileged students into the secondary system, is also a key consideration. Whatever the reasons, these results clearly highlight the continuing crisis in public secondary school education in Brazil and the major problems involved in expanding opportunities for young people from the poorer echelons of society.

PROSPECTS FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION

The scenario outlined in this brief diagnosis reaffirms all the evidence regarding the continuing crisis of the system, and its implications for the education and training of our young people. Of particular note has been the difficulty of adequately addressing the crisis in secondary school education. Following 25 years of the failure of Law 5692 (1971), which made vocational education compulsory in all secondary schools, the past 15 years have witnessed an avalanche of reforms announced by the Federal Government. These reforms reveal an abysmal gap between policy formulation and actual implementation of the much-needed changes. The upshot is that the secondary education crisis continues to baffle governments, managers and teachers alike and, most crucially, to thwart the introduction of new educational and training opportunities more in tune with the aspirations of the majority of young people.

The main recent reforms include:

1. In 1996, the new LDB (Law of Directives and Bases of National Education) determined that secondary school would mark the final stage of basic education – general education to which every young citizen is entitled.
2. In 1998, the establishment of FUNDEF set the seal on universal elementary education and increased the supply of this level of education by the municipalities.
3. In 1998, the Ministry of Education (MEC) released new *National Curriculum Guidelines for Secondary Schools*, based on the principles of contextualization and



interdisciplinarity. These guidelines established a common core consisting of three broad areas of knowledge and a 'diverse' base integrated with this core, while preserving the freedom of schools to plan their own curricula. The ENEM was introduced in the same year. This was a national voluntary examination inspired by the new guidelines, and was aimed at assessing the skills and abilities of students on completion of basic education.

4. The 1998 reform also established that vocational training should be provided in parallel to secondary school (after regular school hours) or at the post-secondary level. From 2004 onwards, new federal legislation restored the possibility of "integrated enrolment" (i.e. regular secondary schooling together with technical training).
5. In 2006, changes in legislation made the teaching of philosophy, sociology, history and Afro-Brazilian culture mandatory by 2011.
6. In 2007, the Federal Government established the FUNDEB, thereby substantially boosting the funding available for secondary education, especially in the poorer states. MEC also launched an extensive programme to expand the federal technical schools network.
7. In 2009, MEC launched a new reform: the Innovative Secondary Education Programme, focused on improving the quality of teaching, supporting the development of curriculum proposals in the state-run network system, fostering curriculum innovation and restructuring the secondary school system by combining general, scientific, technological, cultural and technical-experimental knowledge.
8. In 2009, MEC also introduced radical changes in the ENEM, turning it into a national centralized university entrance exam.
9. In January 2012, MEC went further by announcing new curriculum guidelines for secondary schools, insisting on 12 compulsory subjects (including the Spanish language), and recommending the inclusion of cross-subject material such as Food and Nutrition Education, Environmental Education, Traffic Education and Human Rights Education.
10. In September 2012, the Federal Government launched the National Programme of Technical Education (PRONATEC), aimed at providing incentives for vocational courses and fostering partnerships with the private sector.

Despite this plethora of reforms, the results of the national assessments continue to surprise and disappoint those responsible for the conduct of educa-



tional policy in Brazil. As demonstrated in this article, student performance in the nationwide tests and the 'efficiency' indicators of the system indicate that the various policies have produced very little effect, despite the frenetic law-making activity by the government.

In Brazil, as in many other countries, secondary school began as a preparatory stage for university entrance. It was aimed at the minority of young people from better-educated families, with its typically over-crowded curricula (covering predominantly academic subjects) geared to meeting the requirements of university entrance exams and, thereafter, ensuring access to higher education. The entrance examinations for the public universities, generally highly competitive and aimed at selecting the best students, effectively ended up distorting the entire secondary school curriculum.

The recent reforms have not resulted in significant changes in the curricula of the state systems, which have continued to follow their traditional approach. Regardless of the expansion of secondary school enrolment between 1999 and 2005, the structure of the system has remained rooted in the past. While the decentralized entrance exams of recent years served as the major reference point around which the secondary school curriculum revolved, this changed after 2009 with the introduction of the ENEM curriculum as the benchmark. Given the model as it stands at the moment, it is virtually impossible to think in terms of alternative education approaches, or of a more diversified and flexible system geared to satisfying the different demands and aspirations of young people. In addition to selecting students for admission to higher education, the ENEM has become an obligatory requirement for access to innumerable federal funding programmes for students (PROUNI, PRONATEC, scholarships etc.). It has become, in practice, a basic requirement of the system: without it, students have access to nothing.

The relative stagnation in the number of students graduating from secondary education, the high dropout rates and the below-standard results obtained in the national examinations, continue to be of concern to the education authorities, and have led to organised civil society forming NGOs and movements calling for improvements in education. In 2007, the then Minister of Education, Fernando Haddad, announcing the results of the national assessments, admitted that secondary school education was in deep crisis. In an attempt to find inspiration for further reforms, a series of surveys and seminars organized by the MEC focused on proposals and models deployed in different countries, but the outcome of these initiatives never reached



as far as the classroom. In mid-2012, the new Minister of Education, Aloisio Mercadante, shocked with the results of SAEB 2011, engaged state secretaries of education, experts and organized movements to think of a new model for secondary education. As recently as July 2013, led by the MEC and the National Council of State Secretaries of Education (CONSED), the Federal Government announced its intention to submit a new plan for secondary school reform to Congress. Yet another new 'reform' process will therefore soon be underway.

The current debate on secondary school education is revisiting the age-old dilemma about the purpose of this level of schooling. While integrating (or not) secondary education with vocational training is not a solution, the old debate about the reforms nevertheless continues to invoke this false dilemma, as if no other option were available for resolving the problems of educating the young.

A pressing question is whether simply integrating secondary education with vocational training is likely to solve the problems of low educational performance and encourage unmotivated young people to attend schools that have nothing to do with their real aspirations. Is everything that is expected to be taught in secondary school genuinely necessary for everyone, regardless of the student's future technical course or area of expertise at a higher level? What areas of the curriculum should be reinforced? Should the school curriculum be more varied and flexible? How can the architecture of the system respond to different educational attainment levels, expectations and living conditions of young people? How varied should the degrees of flexibility be?

In a Knowledge Society, with its increasing levels of complexity, preparing all citizens for the world of life and work requires mastery of skills and abilities in reading and writing, as well as problem-solving for a better understanding of the world around them. These are all skills that only a minority of young Brazilians possess by the time they reach adulthood.

In addition to moving towards resolving our dire problems of school management, thought must be given to dealing with two other crucial issues: (i) re-designing the curriculum to reflect learning expectations, enabling students to gain a thorough grasp of general skills, and (ii) re-designing the architecture of the secondary system to ensure that educational flexibility and diversity at this level remain at the core of the contemporary educational agenda.



In sum, the debate on the new secondary school reform should give serious consideration to curriculum changes and overall organizational structure:

a) Regarding the curriculum, the guidelines of the 1998 reform and the 2012 guidelines already provide an outline of the areas of knowledge and skills that all learners need. These guidelines can be used to inform the state curricula; yet it would be advisable to revisit them with a critical eye, building a consensus around learning expectations and fostering a permanent bond between the curriculum and educational technologies and innovations in the classroom.

b) As for the integration/coordination of secondary school with vocational education, it is important to keep all options open with regard to alternative training, obviously within feasible financial boundaries. At the same time an outlet should be provided for individuals who wish to continue studying prior to access to higher education. The same should be available to those who choose to leave school at age 18 for professional reasons.

c) In terms of a more flexible organizational structure that will bolster diversification in secondary education, vocational training programmes can be created with planning and logistical assistance provided by the municipal authorities or through public-private partnerships, as envisaged by PRO-NATEC and along the lines of certain experiments already undertaken by the states.

Finally, it is essential to encourage serious debate on how to render the curriculum truly flexible. In particular, we must look at the different degrees of difficulty of the areas that appeal most to students, provided that core subjects and basic skills have been learned by all. It is a controversial, but urgent topic that has to do with the single secondary school model. It would also be of interest to discuss organizational alternatives that combine general basic instruction for all with particular areas of interest to the students, both in the preparatory courses for higher education and in the vocational training courses, without prejudice to future choices. And, whatever direction the reform takes, it is vital to pay attention to the concerns of organized society and especially the concerns of young people themselves, since they are generally excluded from the educational debates that have a direct effect on their future.



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HAROLDO DA GAMA TORRES is an economist and demographer with particular expertise in social policies. As a specialist in quantitative socioeconomic research, Dr. Torres has provided professional services to over 200 clients on a wide variety of topics, including education, business intelligence, banking, small businesses development, environmental impact evaluation, health, housing and public sanitation. He has published extensively and collaborated with several government agencies, international organizations (IADB, UNDP, ECLAC, UNFPA and the World Bank) and private companies. He is currently director of analysis and dissemination at the Seade Foundation (www.seade.gov.br), a consulting body within the São Paulo State Government.

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