

Challenges and opportunities in the insertion of adolescents in the labor market

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ABSTRACT

The integration of adolescents into society is a complex current issue. Young people face a changing work environment, driven by technological advances and specific skills. This dynamic requires a solid education, not always accessible, making the professional trajectory more challenging. Policies aimed at training young people, such as internships and training, are crucial. However, socioeconomic factors lead many to work early, often in informal conditions, threatening the educational and professional future of many adolescents. Based on this context, the complex issue of the insertion of adolescents in Brazilian society is investigated. The study adopts the analysis through a systematic review, revealing that, despite the opportunities through training programs, there are significant socioeconomic barriers. The research concludes that there is a need for more effective policies to better prepare adolescents for the labor market.

Keywords: Adolescent, Society, Education, Politics, Psychology.

INTRODUCTION

The insertion of adolescents in society represents a multifaceted challenge for contemporary society. Young people are confronted with a constantly evolving work scenario, marked by digitalization, automation, qualification and demands for specialized skills. This reality demands a robust educational background, often difficult to access, making the path to employability more complex and selective.

Opportunities increase when public policies and organizations focus on vocational training programs specifically targeting young people. Initiatives such as internships, apprenticeship programs, and hands-on training can provide them with the chance to gain hands-on experience, while also developing skills and competencies that are essential for the contemporary market. Education also plays a key role, and it is vital that school curricula are aligned with current and future market demands, including technical and vocational education as a viable and valued alternative.

However, one cannot ignore the socioeconomic obstacles that many adolescents face. Most of them are pressured to work prematurely, due to the financial conditions of their families, often in

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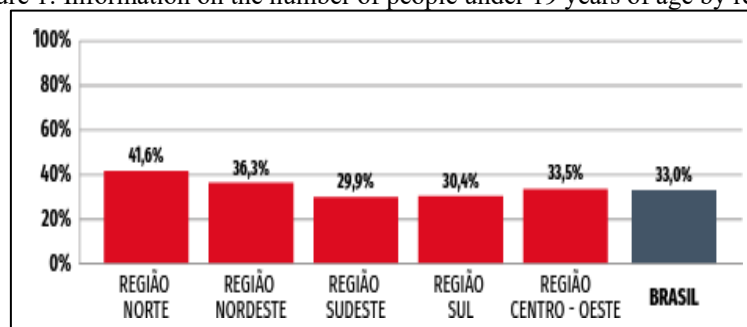
informal positions and without proper legal protection. This reality can compromise the continuity of their educational training and limit their long-term career prospects.

The present study aims to analyze this situation and is justified to the extent that the insertion of adolescents in society becomes problematic, as it is directly related to the socioeconomic development of the country and the future of the Brazilian workforce. In this context, ensuring adequate opportunities for these young people not only promotes their social and economic integration, but also empowers the next generation of professionals. In addition, by understanding the challenges faced by them, it is possible to propose more efficient policies and strategies for their effective insertion, guaranteeing their rights and favoring the sustainable growth of the country.

In Brazil, the criterion for defining children and adolescents is strictly age, as established by the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA). Established by Law No. 8,069 of 1990, this statute defines in its article 2 that: "a child is considered, for the purposes of this law, a person up to twelve years of age incomplete, and an adolescent is one between twelve and eighteen years of age" (Brasil, 1990, p.3). Thus, in Brazil, children are individuals up to 11 years of age, and adolescents, those who are between 12 and 18 years of age.

Data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), cited by Abrinq (2023), indicate that in 2022 there were 68.6 million young people between 0 and 19 years old in Brazil. Almost a third of this total (29.9%) live in the Southeast Region, the most densely populated in the country. However, when looking at the proportion within the regions, the North stood out with more than 41.6% of its population composed of this age group, indicating a predominance of children and adolescents in its demographics.

Figure 1: Information on the number of people under 19 years of age by regions



Source: Abrinq (2023)

Also noteworthy is information on the distribution of children and adolescents between 5 and 17 years of age in Brazil who, in 2013, were engaged in work activities. These include those who worked for their own subsistence and/or personal use. These data, segmented by age group, provide a

detailed view of the occupational situation of young people in Brazil during the period from 2016 to 2019.

Figure 2: Information on children and adolescents with work activities according to the latest survey by IBGE and Abriq

ANO	DE 5 A 9 ANOS DE IDADE	DE 10 A 13 ANOS DE IDADE	DE 14 A 15 ANOS DE IDADE	DE 16 A 17 ANOS DE IDADE	POPULAÇÃO EM SITUAÇÃO DE TRABALHO INFANTIL
2016	103.272	344.314	549.408	1.127.733	2.124.727
2017	112.216	335.675	466.974	1.060.643	1.975.508
2018	94.833	320.647	484.367	1.016.049	1.915.896
2019	91.322	285.385	442.166	949.602	1.768.475

Source: Abriq (2023)

From the data presented, it is possible to observe certain trends and concerns regarding the engagement of adolescents at work in Brazil between 2016 and 2019. For the 14 to 15 age group, in 2016, there were 549,408 adolescents working. In 2017, this number fell to 466,974, indicating a reduction, while in 2018, there was a small increase, with 484,367 employed adolescents. However, in 2019, there were 442,166 adolescents working, which is a significant figure. For the age group of 16 to 17 years, in 2016, there were 1,126,733 adolescents working. This number progressively fell in the following years, registering 1,060,643 in 2017, 1,016,049 in 2018 and reaching 949,602 in 2019.

The analysis of these data indicates that, over the years, there has been a general trend towards a decrease in the number of adolescents engaged in work activities, especially for those aged between 16 and 17 years. This is an indicator considered positive, since it is understood that the school is the place of the child and adolescent.

Even so, given the significant number of adolescents engaged in work, it is crucial that there are public policies and initiatives aimed not only at reducing child labor, but also at the creation of programs that should be appropriate for this age group. This is because it is evident that many adolescents, whether due to economic necessity or choice, are looking for job opportunities (Gomes, 2021). Thus, it is important to ensure that these opportunities are safe, regulated, and that they contribute to the personal and professional development of young people, rather than exploiting them. In view of the reality of child labor, it was observed the need for a global and conscious training of these young people for this work.

In this sense, the creation of programs that assist in the formation and training of this public is advocated, preparing them for an increasingly competitive society. Training can include technical skills, socio-emotional competencies, and career guidance. In addition, it is suggested that it is vital to monitor these young people, ensuring that they are in safe work environments and that their rights are being respected, according to Ferreira and Pomponet (2020). Also according to the authors, in the medium and long term, the effective implementation of programs that meet these principles can strengthen the economy, creating a continuous flow of well-prepared professionals who drive innovation, productivity, and competitiveness on the global stage. This, in turn, can lead to more robust and sustainable economic growth, benefiting the entire nation.

It is noteworthy that by investing in youth, it is possible to shape the leaders and decision-makers of tomorrow. Thus, it is essential that they are supported, educated, and integrated into society in an efficient and meaningful way, ensuring a more promising future for all (Guimarães, 2020). To discuss this issue, this research was proposed, which aims to discuss the challenges and opportunities in the insertion of adolescents in the labor market. To this end, a survey is carried out based on a systematic review of the inclusion policies for society in force in Brazil.

METHODOLOGY

For the elaboration of this article, the integrative literature review method was used (Souza, Silva & Carvalho, 2010). Decision motivated by the fact that integrative review allows a comprehensive understanding of current knowledge on a specific topic. This method is conducted in order to identify, analyze and synthesize the results of independent studies that deal with the same subject (Souza, Silva & Carvalho, 2010). This review was conducted to answer the question: What are the public policy proposals that are in force to organize child and youth labor?

The bibliographic survey was carried out from November 2023 to March 2024, using the Scielo, LILACS, and PePsic databases, aiming to cover a wide range of scientific publications relevant to the topic. The descriptors in Portuguese 'Public Policies', 'Public Policies AND youth', and 'public policies AND youth work' were used in order to refine the search and ensure the relevance of the retrieved studies.

The inclusion criteria adopted were: articles published in the period from 2019 to 2023, in Portuguese, and that presented public policies for youth employment. Studies that did not mention public policy issues and those that only spoke of the work activity itself of young people were excluded from the analysis.

In order to systematize policies aimed at the inclusion of young people in work, the environment and society, detailed information on different initiatives adopted over the years is

presented below. The table below compiles the authors who discussed each policy, the official nomenclature of each program and the main objective behind its creation. Through this information, it is possible to understand the context of how government actions are being designed for this audience.

Table 1: National Policies for the insertion of adolescents in the labor market

Author and Year	Politics	Objective of the Policy
ILO, 2009	National Youth Inclusion Program – Projovem	Raise the schooling and complete elementary education of young people, promoting professional qualification and citizenship. The municipalities were responsible for training, and the young people received a financial incentive. In 2007, the program was unified with others, changing its structure and age group served.
ANDRADE; JESUS; SANTOS, 2016	Young Apprentice Program	Encourage companies to hire young people, promoting technical-professional training and skills development.
GUIMARÃES; ALMEIDA, 2018; BRAZIL, 2003	National First Job Program – PNPE	Promotion of the insertion of young people (16-24 years old) from poor families and without employment relationship in the labor market and strengthening of schooling. Or the program seeks to create jobs for young people or prepare them for the market, qualifying them and promoting social inclusion.
GUIMARÃES; ALMEIDA, 2018	Youth Social Consortiums – CSJs	Strengthen the qualification, sociability and self-esteem of young people from poor families, with a focus on quilombolas, Afro-descendants and indigenous people. He also sought to create Youth Centers for promote meetings and actions aimed at the sociability and qualification of young people.
GUIMARÃES; ALMEIDA, 2018	Christian Youth Action	Program aimed at regions with low human development index with decentralized actions. It was carried out by entities hired by the city halls.
JORGE, 2018	National Vocational Training Plan – Planfor	Develop professional education actions to reduce unemployment and underemployment, with a focus on the most vulnerable young people. Challenges faced by Planfor include workload, quality of courses and disarticulation with others policies.
GUIMARÃES; ALMEIDA, 2018	Entrepreneurship and Social Responsibility Program	Aimed at creating credit for young people, with a special line of credit, but requires training, making it difficult for low-income young people to access it.
GUIMARÃES; ALMEIDA, 2018	Factory School Program	Unite theory and practice for the insertion of young people in the labor market, with partnerships with companies and NGOs, and supervision of the Ministry of Education.

Source: Study results

DISCUSSIONS

When analyzing policies aimed at the inclusion of young people in work in society, it is possible to perceive a constant evolution and adaptation to the socioeconomic challenges faced in different historical moments. A recurring emphasis is on vocational training and education, evidenced, for example, in "Vocational Training – Planfor", as cited by Jorge (2018) and Guimarães and Almeida (2018). This plan specifically aims to develop vocational education actions to reduce unemployment and underemployment, paying special attention to the most vulnerable young people.

Another evident trend is the concern with the insertion of young people in their first job, as noted in the "National First Job Program – PNPE". According to Guimarães and Almeida (2018), the

central objective is to promote the insertion of young people from poor families to work in society, combining this with the strengthening of schooling.

In addition, special attention is paid to specific social groups. The "Social Youth Consortiums – CSJs" focused on quilombolas, Afro-descendants and indigenous people, demonstrating a more inclusive and diverse approach in trying to address historical inequalities.

The practical and theoretical approach, combining formal education and experience in the market, is highlighted in the "Factory School Program", according to Guimarães and Almeida (2018). Such a strategy recognizes the importance of the integral education of young people, preparing them both for the market and for citizenship.

It is also relevant to highlight the "Youth Inclusion Program – Projovem", cited by the ILO (2009), with the objective not only of insertion for work in society, but also of raising schooling, evidencing a holistic approach that considers educational training and professional qualification as interdependent pillars.

There is also emphasis on the Young Apprentice, which according to Andrade, Santos and Jesus (2016), represents one of the most significant efforts in promoting the inclusion of young people in society, ensuring technical-professional training and the development of essential skills and competencies. With regard to the Young Apprentice, apprenticeship, as outlined by the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA), refers to technical-professional training that follows the guidelines of the educational legislation in force in Brazil (BRASIL, 1990). This definition emphasizes the educational character of learning, ensuring that it is delivered in line with established norms. On the other hand, Federal Decree No. 9,579/2018 specifies the figure of the apprentice in the labor context. According to this decree, an apprentice is someone who is between 14 and 24 years old and who enters as an apprentice, stipulated in the Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT) (Brasil, 2005). This decree, therefore, adds a labor dimension to the concept of apprenticeship. As established in the Federal Constitution of 1988 and reinforced by Amendment No. 20 of 1998, in article 7, item XXXIII, there is a specific regulation for the hiring of young people. This regulation prohibits night, dangerous or unhealthy work for minors under 18 years of age, while any form of work is prohibited for minors under 16 years of age, except when they are apprentices, from the age of 14 (Brasil, 1988).

In promoting the insertion of young people to work in society, the Young Apprentice Program (as highlighted in this study), established by Law 10,097/2000 and expanded by Federal Decree No. 9,570/2018 stands out. According to Andrade, Santos and Jesus (2016), the National Learning Program represents an effort by the federal government through public policies. The objective is to integrate young people from 14 years old, providing opportunities for them to start their careers

early, aiming at the combination of work and study, in accordance with labor standards. Law 10.097/2000 is often referred to as the Apprenticeship Law. It stipulates that companies, whether medium or large, are required to hire apprentices who, consequently, will be incorporated into the workforce, as long as they meet the defined prerequisites.

According to information from Government Programs (2018), the Young Apprentice is a government strategy, which aims to open doors for students, whether they are attending or having already completed high school. The program is crucial to provide the experience of the first job, allowing a fusion between theoretical and practical knowledge. Luz (2015) highlights the intention of the 2000 legislation as being essential to stimulate the integration of young people and adolescents, aged between 14 and 24 years, in the work environment. One of the conditions is that they are regularly attending school. In addition, these young people may also be linked to apprenticeship programs associated with renowned entities such as the National Service for Industrial Learning (Senai), the National Service for Commercial Learning (Senac), the National Service for Rural Learning (Senar) and the National Service for Transportation Learning (Senat).

The legitimacy of the apprenticeship contract is ensured by its proper registration in the Work and Social Security Card, accompanied by proof of enrollment and school attendance of the young person, as well as his/her enrollment in an apprenticeship program. In the context of this type of contract, young beneficiaries have rights such as remuneration and bonuses, in addition to essential contributions such as the Guarantee Fund for Length of Service (FGTS) and the amount destined to the National Institute of Social Security (INSS), as highlighted by Luz (2015). In turn, Federal Decree No. 5,598/2005, in its article 3, defines that the young apprentice contract is characterized as a "special employment contract". It is signed in writing, with a maximum duration of two years, where the employer ensures adequate technical-professional training to the apprentice, aligned with his integral development, while he dedicates himself to fulfilling his responsibilities with care.

It is imperative to emphasize that the regulation of this type of contract is based not only on the aforementioned decree, but also on Law No. 10,097/2000 and by the CLT itself in its article 428. This special contract, as pointed out by Andrade, Jesus and (2016), requires strict compliance with certain prerequisites, including its written nature and the limited term of two years of work activity with apprenticeship. It should be noted, however, that the workload for the young apprentice is limited to a maximum of six hours per day. With regard to the termination of the apprentice's employment contract, Decree No. 5,598/2005, in its article 28, establishes that the termination may occur at the end of its term, when the apprentice reaches 24 years of age — except for apprentices with disabilities — or early in specific situations, such as: unsatisfactory performance of the

apprentice, serious absences, unjustified absences that lead to school failure or upon request of the apprentice himself (Brasil, 2005).

The programs, in this context, represent a consolidation of efforts to integrate young people into the school-work-training trinomial, guaranteeing them relevant technical-professional training and the cultivation of essential skills. This initiative reflects the commitment of legislation to protect and strengthen youth work, offering them a safe platform to acquire learning and experiences in the professional world.

Despite representing a valuable opportunity for learning and professional development, the insertion of adolescents requires a careful and considered approach. This phase of life, marked by intense physical, psychological and social transformations, requires special attention from all those involved in the learning process.

Incorporating young people into the work environment is much more than simply providing them with a paid activity. It also means offering a safe, ethical and educational space, where adolescents can acquire skills, values and knowledge essential for their integral formation. Thus, it is imperative that companies, educational institutions and other institutions involved in programs aimed at the employability of young people be judicious, ensuring that their rights are respected and that the work environment is appropriate for their development.

Oliveira (2001) substantiates this reality, citing that many of these young people end up in low-skilled jobs, such as stockers or office-boys, and face challenges that can affect their personal development and identity. In addition, an exclusive focus on adolescents, without involving their families and without considering the broader socioeconomic context, can be counterproductive. The aggravating factor of income inequality in the country and the ideology that prioritizes work above all else, often without considering the quality or nature of this work, are crucial aspects to be addressed when discussing the insertion of adolescents in society.

In addition, it is essential that there is continuous supervision and evaluation of these programs, to ensure that they are fulfilling their educational and formative purpose, without exposing adolescents to situations of risk or exploitation. After all, the experience of working in society during adolescence can have lasting impacts on an individual's life, influencing their self-esteem, worldview and professional trajectory (Oliveira, 2001). It is understood, then, that it is a collective responsibility to ensure that this experience is positive, constructive and enriching. At such a crucial moment of development, the priority must always be the well-being and integral formation of young people.

This context needs to be interpreted with the most recent information from the IBGE, released in the first section, because the data provided by the IBGE, cited by Abrinq, on the insertion of adolescents in society as a work experience between the years 2016 and 2019 point to a

paradoxical scenario. If, on the one hand, there is a downward trend in the number of adolescents engaged in work activities, on the other hand, the number presented is still alarming, suggesting that many young people, within this age group, are actively participating in the workforce (Abrinq, 2023). However, being part of the workforce, represented by these numbers, does not automatically imply that these adolescents are inserted in a fair and appropriate process for their development.

It is essential to point out that numbers, no matter how expressive they may be, do not always reflect the quality and conditions in which these adolescents are working. What the IBGE data show is a quantitative picture, but there is a lack of a more in-depth analysis of the nature of these jobs, since in the information obtained, the data are purely quantitative, without revealing the working conditions, and whether these young people are receiving adequate opportunities for their training and development (Abrinq, 2023). Many of these adolescents are in informal work situations, without the proper labor rights guaranteed and, even worse, in environments that are potentially harmful to their health and well-being (Andrade; Souza; Muxfeldt, 2019). This scenario leads us to reflect on the urgency of establishing more rigorous public policies and programs for insertion in society that are truly beneficial for these young people. The emphasis, in this perspective, should be placed on the quality of insertion into work in society, and not only on quantity.

The need to be cautious in these processes is even more evident when considering the inherent vulnerability of this age group. Adolescence is a period of transition, where young people are shaping their identity, values, and skills. Thus, they need guidance, support and, above all, opportunities that respect their peculiar development phase (Guimarães, 2020). In this sense, according to Santos (2015), it is essential to recognize that each piece of data represents an individual young person with dreams, aspirations and immense potential. The challenge is to ensure that, while participating in society by working, these adolescents are treated with dignity, receive opportunities for growth and that their integrity is a priority in all aspects. Behind the statistics, there are stories, and the responsibility is to ensure that these stories are of success, growth and achievement.

According to Bastos (2009), adolescents face considerably high unemployment rates compared to other demographic groups. Several factors contribute to this situation, including the lack of previous professional experience, the increase in the number of young people in society, and their vulnerability in periods of lower economic activity. For many of them, salaried employment is the main way to enter society, which is sometimes associated with precarious and unstable employment conditions. Even in times of economic prosperity and declining overall unemployment, youth unemployment tends to decline at a slower pace. Thus, according to Bastos (2009), the inexperience characteristic of this age group is often cited as a significant barrier to entry. As ways to improve this situation, Padilha (2010) mentions the union of actions between municipal, state and federal

governments, as a vital action to establish a firm base for the future of society, especially by guaranteeing the rights of young people. It is imperative, in the formulation of public policies, to recognize the particularities of the functioning of work and to face the challenge of youth unemployment, given the high unemployment rate and the growing young population of working age.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has highlighted a sharp increase in unemployment among young people aged 15 to 24 over the past decade. According to Oliveira and Tavares (2017), to guarantee the rights of young people, well-planned, continuous public policies with well-defined resources are essential. The IBASE/POLIS survey (2005) evidenced the importance of work in the lives of young people, emphasizing the need for more job opportunities, professional training and paid internships. Branco (2005) argues for the need for specific public policies to encourage the demand for youth work. Unicef, on the other hand, points out the importance of collective work as a means of socialization, reinforcing the role of initiatives such as the Apprentice Law. In this, Filho (2000) mentions that education and preparation to enter the work are intrinsic to the process of training young people. Thus, Oliveira and Tavares (2017) emphasize the role of the State in offering fair job opportunities in society. The introduction of young people to the world of work is essential for individual training. Federal institutes provide access to vocational education for young people, a crucial step in their development.

The National Youth Council, in turn, highlights the importance of integration and transversality in public policies for youth. In this sense, the Youth Pact is mentioned by studies as essential to consider young people as subjects of rights, recognizing their diversity and facing inequalities, ensuring integrated and transversal public policies at all levels of government.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study in question brought to light the multifaceted challenges that adolescents face when trying to enter work in Brazilian society. The current scenario, characterized by technological advances and a demand for specialized skills, puts young people in a position in which adequate educational preparation is more than essential, but often inaccessible. The opportunities, however, are expanded when the focus turns to professional training programs aimed at this audience. Being able to include in these learning programs, monitoring by a psychologist, to better guide them, support them to make better professional choices, such as internships and practical training emerge as fundamental tools, providing adolescents with the necessary experience to navigate an ever-changing work environment.

However, the socioeconomic context cannot be left aside. Many young people, due to financial pressures, find themselves in informal work positions, lacking the necessary legal protection. This reality not only limits their prospects for professional growth, but also threatens their continued educational training.

What this study identifies, based on the review, is the more robust urgency of better structured public policies, as well as the implementation of educational and professional strategies that are aligned with the needs of the current market. These measures will not only benefit adolescents, but will strengthen the economy by preparing a more qualified workforce adapted to contemporary demands.

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