

Brazil Is a Cultural Desert for the Young

Contributed by Alessandra Bastos
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The Brazilian government should create a special secretariat to deal with issues of concern to adolescents and young people and to develop government policies for them, affirms Brazil's head of the Presidential Executive Office, Minister Luiz Dulci.

"There has been a growth in the number of youth organizations created by youths themselves to defend their interests. To the degree the youth movement grows, Brazilian democracy incorporates these issues, and government policies arise," the Minister explains.

There are 48 million young people between the ages of 15 and 29 in Brazil today.

According to a study by the United Nations Education, Science, and Culture Organization (UNESCO), which interviewed 10 thousand Brazilian youths in July of this year, it is possible to perceive that, with the passage of time, they remove themselves from the educational process.

83% of adolescents between 15 and 17 study. Between the ages of 24 and 26, only 18% continue studying. At the age of 27, 87% are no longer part of the educational process.

For the researcher Miriam Abramovay, one of the coordinators of the study, what is needed is the formulation of government policies directed not only at education or health, but to encompass all aspects of young people's lives, such as investments in culture and leisure.

"The resources for childhood are always greater than for youth. It is only when youngsters begin to cause trouble in the matter of violence that they begin to be seen in a different light," the researcher contends.

The lack of cultural opportunities is one of the most serious problems, according to the study.

Only 3% of the adolescents between 15 and 17 attend the theater, and only 2% visit museums.

17% go to libraries and movie theaters. And 18% attend soccer matches. According to the study, 21% of young people access computers, daily.

Young people's satisfaction with life was also researched: 69% of those who were interviewed said they were satisfied, while 22% were unsatisfied.

The results of the study were announced November 5 at the launching of the UNESCO book *Government Policies by/for/with Youth Populations*, which presents successful experiences and policies developed in Latin American countries.

The experiences regarded as models include scholarships granted to young people by the Argentinean government, full-time schools in Chile, and the Brazilian AIDS program.

"The disarmament campaign shows how Brazil can have successful policies. Argentina has just approved the campaign, which will also be conducted there," reports the UNESCO representative in Brazil, Jorge Werthein.

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