


## Educational policies and the “nem nem” generation: an analysis regarding the New Public Management<sup>1</sup>

*Políticas educacionais e a geração “nem nem”:  
uma análise a partir da Nova Gestão Pública*

*Políticas educacionales y la generación “nem nem”:  
un análisis a partir de la Nueva Gestión Pública*

Thaís Godoi de Souza<sup>2</sup> 

Maria Eunice França Volsi<sup>3</sup> 

Jani Alves da Silva Moreira<sup>4</sup> 

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to discuss the relation between educational policies and juvenile protagonism regarding the generation called “Nem Nem”, that is to say, young people who neither study nor work. It takes into account the New Public Management context seeking to identify the influence of the neoliberal mainstream of this new management over the propositions related to young people’s activity in the job market. This is an exploratory study whose results showed that young people are one of the population segments that are most affected by social and, mainly, economical changes that have been happening since 2000. Youth empowerment and a focus on education have shaped one of the greatest concerns of those who rule the country. These two factors have been overrated by governments and seen as the solution to social inequalities, poverty control, illiteracy reduction and the promotion of economic and social development.

**Keywords:** Youth educational policies. “Nem nem” generation. New Public Management.

**Resumo:** O texto tem como objetivo discutir a relação entre políticas educacionais e o protagonismo juvenil no âmbito da geração denominada de “Nem Nem” no contexto da Nova Gestão Pública, a fim de identificar a influência da corrente neoliberal do novo gerencialismo nas proposições para a atuação do jovem no mercado de trabalho. Trata-se de um estudo exploratório, no qual os resultados apontaram que os jovens representam um dos segmentos mais afetados pelas transformações sociais e, principalmente, econômicas pós o ano de 2000. O empoderamento do jovem e o enfoque na educação têm configurado uma das principais preocupações do bloco no poder, atribuindo-lhes um valor superestimado na amenização das desigualdades sociais, regulação da pobreza, diminuição do analfabetismo e promoção do desenvolvimento econômico e social.

**Palavras-chave:** Políticas educacionais para a juventude. Geração “nem nem”. Nova Gestão Pública.

**Resumen:** El texto tiene como objetivo discutir la relación entre política educativa y el protagonismo juvenil en el ámbito de la generación denominada “Nem Nem”. Además, considera el contexto de la Nueva Gestión Pública con la finalidad de identificar la influencia de la corriente neoliberal del nuevo gerencialismo en las proposiciones para la actuación del joven en el mercado de trabajo. Se trata de un estudio exploratorio. Los resultados apuntaron que los jóvenes representan uno de los segmentos más afectados por las transformaciones sociales y, principalmente, económicas después del año 2000. El empoderamiento del joven y el enfoque en la educación han configurado una de las principales preocupaciones del grupo que está en el poder, valor sobrestimado en la mitigación de las desigualdades sociales, regulación de la pobreza, disminución del analfabetismo y promoción del desarrollo económico y social.

**Palabras clave:** Políticas educativas para la juventud. Generación “nem nem”. Nueva Gestión Pública.

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<sup>2</sup> State University of Maringá (UEM) – Email: tgsouza2@uem.br

<sup>3</sup> State University of Maringá (UEM) – Email: mariaeunice08@yahoo.com.br

<sup>4</sup> State University of Maringá (UEM) – Email: professorajani@hotmail.com

## Introduction

This paper aims to analyze the situation of Brazilian youth education, especially after 2000<sup>ii</sup>, in order to identify relations with the New Public Management (NPM) and the propositions suggested by educational reforms which focus on the development of abilities and skills that young people are required to have if they wish to enter the labor market and fit into it.

This is an exploratory study in which we discuss the pivotal aspects of Brazilian youth policies and their relation with the NPM. The issue presented by this investigation arises from the debate proposed by Antunes (2018, p. 79) on the new 21<sup>st</sup> century services industry proletariat, namely infoproletariat / cyberproletariat, conceived as a segment which is “deprived of the right to control and manage its own labor, and which has grown exponentially since capitalism triggered the technological-informational-digital mutations era”. It also arises from discussions on educational reforms and the NPM.

According to mass media, Brazilian young citizens are the most affected segment when it comes to the impact of transformations in the labor world. They also highlight the fact that young people are both victims and protagonists of violence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, naming them as ‘*Nem Nem*’<sup>iii</sup>, a juvenile generation which neither studies nor works. In the period from 2003 to 2010, young people had more visibility in terms of their rights in Brazil. That was due to the fact that, during the aforementioned period, public authorities increasingly discussed youth-related topics, as well as the creation and restructuring of policies aiming at young people’s needs. According to the Federal Government, it was necessary to ensure young people’s rights, so that our democracy would be strengthened (BRASIL, 2006).

Antunes (2018) states that productive capital structuring started being intensified in Brazil in the 90’s, when Neoliberalism was implemented in the country, which led companies to adopt new work organization models. The combination of better qualified labor force, use of high technology and intensification of labor force, thus, became a feature of capitalism in Brazil. Such combination, throughout the years, resulted in flexibilization, informality and precarious life conditions for the working class.

Before 1980, the distinctive feature of Brazilian economy was a strong industrial expansion. Conversely, in the last three decades, the tertiary sector, which comprises the services sector and goods trade, increased its participation in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It went from 69% of the value added to the GDP in 1997 to 73% in 2008. Goods trade was the main booster of such increase for its contribution was 8% of the value added to the GDP in 1997 compared to 13% in 2018. Regarding the services sector, despite a significant participation in the value added to the GDP, it remained stable with a contribution of 60% in 1997 and 2018 (BRASIL, 2019).

This transformation of capitalist accumulation affected labor force composition and the significant service expansion, which reshaped the Brazilian working class. The advent of informatics and, consequently, the expansion of Information and Communication

Technologies (ICT) companies gave rise to a new services proletariat, called infoproletariat or cyberproletariat (ANTUNES, 2018). A result of this new scenario was the informalization of work, which imposes on workers loss of rights, outsourcing, flexibilization and precarization.

Outsourcing started gaining space in Brazil in the 90's, when the Brazilian Federal Industrial Park was privatized. The economic tripod that supported the country – national, foreign and state-owned capital – reduced the State productive sector, caused its economy to be more internationalized, and the state sector was incorporated into the external capital (ANTUNES, 2018).

Within this new scenario of total outsourcing, which is a characteristic of the new public management, the improvement of lower classes' living conditions started being discussed by organizations and international organs, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Bank (WB). It was and still is necessary to diminish social inequality in order to solve this issue. Agencies' campaigns and governmental programs then started spreading the idea of autonomy and power – empowering socially marginalized groups, such as young people.

In order to carry out our analyses, we relied on the definition of youth provided by Alves (2008). The author defines youth as a product of modernity, be it understood as a stage of life or juvenile experience. The documents on youth social policies conceived by the organs related to the Brazilian Federal Government take into account the age range from 15 to 29<sup>iv</sup>, although they discuss the fact that youth is not determined by age.

In order to address the topic we focus on, we will first present an overview of the situation of young people in Brazil regarding population statistics and violence. Then, we will approach the relation among the New Public Management, the '*Nem Nem*' generation and juvenile protagonism aiming to establish a relation with the propositions and the country's educational policies.

## Young people and youth in Brazil

In 2000, the age group from 15 to 24 represented 34 million people<sup>v</sup>, which corresponded to 20,1% of Brazil's population at that time (BRASIL, 2000). In 2010, a quarter of the population consisted of people aged from 15 to 29, which represented 51,3 million people (BRASIL, 2010a).

In 2018, that number decreased, totaling 33 million inhabitants within the age group aforementioned, which corresponded to 17% of the country's population. Costa, Rocha and Silva (2018) claim that the large number of young people in Brazil is called 'the youth wave', which began in 2003 and will come to an end in 2022. That is the year when the young population will start decreasing, reaching 25 million in 2040, which will represent 12% of Brazil's population.

In 2002, Brazil was ranked as the 5th country with the highest murder rates among young people, and the highest rates when it comes to young men (93%) in urban areas of large cities (WAISELFISZ, 2004). In 2014, the increase in violent lethality was more intense within the age range from 15 to 29 compared to the rest of the population. Firearm-related homicide rates went from 6.104, in 1980, to 42.291 in 2014, which corresponds to an increase of 592,8%. However, when it comes specifically to young people (15 to 29), the raise was superior, for the rates went from 3.159, in 1980, to 25.255 in 2014, an increase of 699,5% (WAISELFISZ, 2016).

Bearing those data in mind, Brazil starts discussing the institutionalization of youth policies in the 90's, practically one decade after UNESCO declared the International Youth Year (1985), at the World Congress on Youth, in Barcelona, and also after the World Program of Action for Youth (WPAY), in 1996, and the Lisbon Declaration (LD), in 1998 (SOUZA, 2013).

Nonetheless, the Special Commission for Youth Public Policies was only created in 2003. Its aim was devising a National Plan for Youth Public Policies. In March 2004, a group consisting of 19 ministries was formed in order to establish youth-related programs at a national level. The group was coordinated by the General Secretariat of the Presidency, and it resulted in a bill (4.530/2004) "approving the Youth National Plan and taking other actions" (BRASIL, 2004).

It was a contribution from the Special Commission for Youth Public Policies and the National Congress, which worked together from 2003 to 2004 (at regional conferences and during the Youth Week). Different social actors got involved in the creation of a youth plan which could be capable of systematizing young people's priorities. In its creation process, the plan aimed to incorporate young people into the country's development through a youth national policy which would focus on "[...] human, social, cultural, educational, economic, sports-related, religious and family aspects" (BRASIL, 2004, p. 4).

In 2005, a constitutional amendment proposal (394/2005) was devised aiming to include the term **young people** in the 4<sup>th</sup> Chapter (8<sup>th</sup> title) of the 1988 Federal Constitution and, thus, modify its 227<sup>th</sup> Section. It was approved in 2010 through the constitutional amendment number 65/2010 (BRASIL, 2010b).

During the discussions on the constitutional amendment, law number 11.129/2005 (BRASIL, 2005) was promulgated. It established the National Youth Council (Conjuve), which was created to propose follow-up, assessment and guidelines strategies in order to promote public policies for Brazilian youth, and also the Youth National Secretariat, responsible for implementing programs and projects to benefit young people. In order to accomplish the task, in 2006, Conjuve devised the document called "Youth National Policy – Guidelines and Perspectives", whose goal was guiding the creation of policies focusing on the age group in question (BRASIL, 2006).

In 2007, bill number 27/2007 started following the legal channels. It referred to the "Youth Statute", which was approved in 2013 and instituted by law number 12.852, which, in its turn, addresses the rights of young people, the principles and guidelines for youth public

policies and the Youth National System (Sinajuve). The latter regulates young people's rights that must be ensured regarding education, health, work, life, citizenship, freedom, equality, culture, sports, leisure and the environment (BRASIL, 2013). In 2008, decree number 9.306/2018 (BRASIL, 2018a) on the youth national system was issued aiming at the articulation and organization of federal instances in order to promote public policies that could assist young people.

The most recent action to the establishment of youth policies was approved on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019. It was a Draft Resolution (30/2019) which gave rise to the Parliamentary Front for Youth Public Policies. It is responsible for the monitoring, propositions and analyses of programs related to youth public policies, as well as the organization of events whose aim are disseminating measures that are necessary for regulating this segment (BRASIL, 2019d).

Currently, with regard to education in particular, the Brazilian High School Reform number 13.415/2017 (BRASIL, 2017), the Resolution number 3/2018 (BRASIL, 2018b), which update the curricular guidelines for high school level, and also the high school National Common Curricular Base stand out (BRASIL, 2018c). All these documents highlight the need of revising and modernizing the curriculum, in order to provide young people with "adequate" assistance.

The implications of high school and its current reform for the education of Brazilian young people are anchored in the propositions of abilities and skills, aiming to meet the demand imposed by the labor market through curriculum flexibilization. The reform, which was partially funded by the World Bank, bears the mark of the market for "[...] the interest in this reform project goes beyond schools walls, reaching business and political conglomerates in Brazil, which are the main participants involved in the organization of changes in high school structure" (VICENTE, 2019, p. 218).

## **New Public Management (NPM), educacional policies and the "Nem Nem" generation**

In this section, we address the NPM and the '*Nem Nem*' generation in order to establish relations between the influences of the former on educational policies for young people with regard to deeming the aforementioned group responsible for their own upward mobility.

The situation of Brazilian young people, as well as the educational and labor abilities and skills that this group is required to have, should not be seen through a singular view. Conversely, by approaching the issue through a historical perspective, it is possible to notice that it is something that has already been solidified in social relations.

The way we produce life nowadays consists of "[...] environmental drama, social tragedy and financial chaos" (DOWBOR, 2017, p. 36). The way our planet has been managed favors a minor group and the resources which are necessary to fund social policies are "in the hands of a few hundred groups which cannot even manage in a minimally competent way the money they control" (DOWBOR, 2017, p. 36).



The financial capitalism era created a global network of corporative control, which works well for 1% of the population, but not for the rest. “Yields surpass 5%, whereas the world’s GDP increases between 1% and 2,5%” per annum (DOWBOR, 2017, p. 33).

From this scenario in which we have the financialization of wealth and services, emerges the ‘*Nem Nem*’ generation issue. The young Brazilian generation lives in a context that is different from that of previous generations<sup>vi</sup>: we now have a market with fast technological exchanges, a dynamic labor market which demands emerging professions that did not exist ten years ago.

When searching for news on Brazilian young people, we can see that several news reports related to such group have been published since 2012. They refer to young people labeling them as the ‘*Nem Nem*’ generation, which means they neither study, nor work. This concept has been addressed by a research that was carried out at a regional level and was published in 2018. It involved more than 15.000 young people aged from 15 to 24, from nine countries (Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Haiti, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay), and it was supported by several universities and other institutions (NOVELLA *et al.*, 2018).

The research by Novella *et al.* (2018) revealed that the ‘*Nem Nem*’ group mainly consists of women from all the aforementioned countries and also of poor young people, who live in areas which lack resources. Table 1 shows the statistic presented by the research on the juvenile generation in Brazil regarding work and education levels.

**Table 1.** The situation of Brazilian young people (work and education)

Only studying	49%
Working	13%
Working and studying	15%
Neither working, nor studying	23%

Source: Novella *et al.* (2018). Devised by the authors.

According to the research, although the term ‘*Nem Nem*’ may depict the idea that young people are idle and unproductive, 37% of them were searching for a job at the time the survey was carried out, and 72% were engaged in household chores, especially women. It means that, “contrary to established conventions, the study proves that most ‘*Nem Nem*’ are not idle, and they do perform other activities”. Only 4% “did not perform any of the tasks listed, nor claimed to have any disability which could prevent them from working or studying” (NOVELLA *et al.*, 2018, p. 3).

Youth is a critical stage of one’s life, a period in which many decisions on several matters are made, especially when it comes to education and work. Figures show high unemployment and informality rates among young people. The research previously mentioned, which was funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), states that in order to make Latin America achieve economic development in a successful way, it is necessary to boost more inclusive economic models and broaden human capital. That is a

discursive stance marked by the responsabilization of an individual, who is considered to be the protagonist of their own social climbing (NOVELLA *et al.*, 2018).

The study also highlights that school evasion has reached alarming levels among young people, especially at high school level. Young women usually claim that they stop studying due to pregnancy or to take care of a family member. As for young men, they withdraw from school in order to work and, thus, help with their household expenses. In light of the foregoing, in order to have sustainable growth, as well as poverty and inequality reduction, Latin America must strengthen its ability to promote economic growth and social inclusion (NOVELLA *et al.*, 2018).

The study by Novella *et al.* (2018) suggests that, if young people wish to improve their situation, they need to develop and practice flexible abilities in a way that they can adapt to any work task. In order to be professionally successful in the future, their socioemotional abilities, which are characterized by persistence, self-control and affability, must be stimulated.

The argument exposed by Novella *et al.* (2018) on practicing flexible abilities and skills regarding young Latin Americans corroborates the contributions by Lima (2012). According to the author, in the last few decades there was a noticeable inclination to building up functional and adaptive competencies. That means a throughout-life learning process whose aim is developing abilities that will enable young people or any other apprentice to work more, be fast and intelligent, thus allowing their employers better chances to compete in the global economy.

This perspective which considers education capable of redeeming young people, preparing them for alienated labor (the market) and leading them to develop abilities and skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a reductive vision whose conception is functionalist, technical and instrumental, taking us back to the human capital theory according to which:

[...] paradoxically, education's greatest strength is its apparent fragility, its own and generally slow paces, its trial-and-error processes, its uncertainty and lack of immediate and incredible results, its non-stopping processes of dialogue and friendliness [...] (LIMA, 2012, p. 44).

It is noticeable that the social group in question struggles to cope with the social obstacles imposed on them, such as unemployment and school evasion. However, the situation is of major concern considering the consequences of Latin America's developmentalist economics, in which current governments proclaim economic liberalism and social authoritarianism, thus destroying workers' rights and providing poor education.

The studies by Nazzari, Kniphoff and Baquero (2010), Baquero and Hammes (2006), Werthein (2003), as well as a UNESCO's (2006) document, present some analyses of the social capital issue and youth empowerment. They all stress that social engagement and organization in different groups are beneficial to citizenship and social capital supply, since young people are themselves responsible for an increase in their own efficiency.

Regarding the concepts of juvenile protagonism and empowerment, Carvalho (2009) states that this type of speech was incorporated and spread by Brazil in its social programs.

The author points that, according to such speech, young people are responsible for the development of society by engaging in social programs. Therefore, this group is associated with potentiality making use of it “to solve social problems instituted within power networks and strategies through social practices that maintain a hegemony system, in compliance with a governmental logic which is controlled by the capital” (CARVALHO, 2009, p. 126).

Regarding empowerment together with social capital, Carvalho (2009) argues that this is a neoliberal strategy which has been incorporated by the speeches of those who claim to fight poverty. It implies recognizing poor individuals’ ability to fight their situation of vulnerability, thus holding them responsible for their own social condition, completely ignoring the role of the state. Lima (2012), likewise, states that learning has increasingly become a private subject, more dependent on provision of services (market / private sector). The author claims that there has been this apology for self-learning, which jibes with the new trends of individualizing work relations, thus, favoring an entrepreneurial and autonomous individual who manages their own career, the protagonist of their own success or failure.

That is the pattern followed by Brazilian and Latin American documents on youth. According to them, if young people wish to no longer be part of the ‘*Nem Nem*’ group, they have to be the protagonists by developing flexible skills and abilities that are recommended by the current market, thus, adapting to it. That will lead them to be recognized by their efforts.

Nonetheless, the social structure cannot be changed by this meritocratic view. Besides, when it comes to preparing young people focusing on employability, the solution is far from being individual, even when the most common view on employability relies on the idea that each individual will boost their individual chances of finding a job just by getting prepared (LIMA, 2012).

The social, political and economical context evidences that young people’s will or personal interest is not enough to change their ‘*Nem Nem*’ condition. It was not their desire which led them to such condition. On the contrary, work and production relations in our current society have been depriving not only young people, but also a large part of the population of fundamental rights such as education, work and, consequently, the right to live a decent life.

The cruelty of the capitalist mode of production associated with neoliberal management have boosted unemployment, job insecurity and precarious working conditions, thus causing an increase in the number of vulnerable citizens and reducing social protection measures (SOARES, 2003). The implementation of state intervention policies in face of social issues has been closely related to the New Public Management (NPM), also known in Brazil as the new managerialism, a theory on public administration focusing on controlling governance results (BRESSER PEREIRA, 1997).

The NPM aims to reduce costs, effectiveness and efficiency of the state machinery, leading to the clientization of citizens (ANDERSON, 2017). It advocates that the logic of the private sector must be seen as a reference to be followed and that it is the market that must determine public policies. Public services must relinquish bureaucratic formulas in order to



embody the business competition modality. Therefore, citizens are converted into clients, and management is separated from politics, an idea associated with business management (ANDERSON, 2017). In a practical way, we have, as a result, an administrative decentralization system in which state-owned enterprises have limited autonomy, greater discipline and parsimony when making use of recourses in a context marked by austerity and lack of investments, besides a tendency to hire temporary workers for short periods and avoid labor unionists.

According to Anderson (2017), the NPM has had great influence on the precariousness of education and the conditions of future workers. But how does NPM have influence on education and work relations within the institutions and, thus, on young people? The author states that workers are increasingly managed and controlled, having their autonomy diminished. In other words, a new professionalism model has been designed in all professional fields.

Market relations, thus, become dominant in all aspects of life, which makes it difficult to think of the common good. Financial speculation and the flexibility approach have reshaped professional life. In order to fit this new capitalism, workers had to waive stability. The new business culture prepares employees for this new world of job insecurity in the new risk society. Labor turnover results in unfaithfulness to companies, which, in their turn, are characterized as transitory communities. Unstable and temporary jobs do not allow employees of both the present and future to create a life history (ANDERSON, 2017).

The NPM is a neoliberal modality of management which favors the idea of a strong state capable of supporting the financial system and, yet, limited when it comes to social issues (SOARES, 2003). NPM public policies empty public coffers, creating a scenario that reduces state social intervention to the minimum in several areas. Therefore, the market plays the role of a social regulator, holding a legitimizing power. Neoliberal policies “are influenced by deals among philanthropist entrepreneurs, foundations, think tanks, international agencies and global educational businesses” (ANDERSON, 2017, p. 601). Their speeches get into public schools and, as a result, the professional identity of teachers and school administrators is reshaped, which has impact on education (BALL; YOUDELL, 2008).

The presence of the NPM in education institutions aims at a greater emphasis on results and their measurements, making use of quantitative data. It encompasses hiring the private sector to provide public services, besides increasingly hiring consulting firms. This scenario has built up the fallacy of poor-quality public services and institutions which, in their turn, are attacked by constant mockery, so that their credibility is undermined. That is followed by lack of investments and the transference of recourses from the public to the private sector. Thus, we have new markets which attract private suppliers, new commercial activity arenas for “social entrepreneurs” (ANDERSON, 2017).

In light of the foregoing, we can see that, when it comes to young people finding jobs, it is not just about developing abilities and skills, after all, we are controlled by “[...] an economic model of portable human capabilities which leaves most people behind” (SENNETT, 2006, p. 83).

Sennett (2006) refuses the idea according to which an individual himself/herself is able to achieve success in their professional or educational activity for it is closely related to determining social, political and economical factors. The author states that one can rarely succeed within unstable and fragmented social conditions for three reasons. The first one is time, since changing jobs or having temporary ones does not allow workers and their future generations to have a life history, make future plans and build a bond with their employers. “If companies do not offer long-term perspectives, individuals may be forced to write the story of their lives in an improvised way, or even get by on their own without a constant feeling of who they are” (SENNETT, 2006, p. 13).

The second reason refers to talent. It is impossible to develop a full abilities potential and new competencies in this new scenario of the (financial) mode of production, since requirements are constantly changing. “In practical terms, in modern economy, the lifespan of many capabilities is short. In technology and sciences, as well as in more advanced manufacturing methods, workers need to undergo retraining every eight or ten years” (SENNETT, 2006, p. 14).

The author points that the new social order refutes the “handcraft ideal” of learning how to do only one thing, but doing it well, which is seen as economically destructive in the financial capital era. “Instead of handcraft, modern culture proposes a concept of meritocracy which makes room for potential abilities rather than past achievements” (SENNETT, 2006, p. 14). Finally, comes the third reason, which is closely related to the second, and involves getting rid of past experiences.

In view of these reasons listed by Sennett (2006), we can conclude that most people cannot become experts in their work activities in face of these challenges. Everyone needs to have a continuous life history, appreciate past experiences and be proud of their ability to deal with something specific. Yet, Brazilian young people, especially those who work and belong to lower social classes and social minorities, are required to endeavor and develop the emergent and flexible abilities that will be applied to several tasks in different economic fields, since the positions offered by companies are temporary.

In this scenario marked by deprivation of rights and economic crisis, the Brazilian industrial sector registered a decrease of 1,3% in March compared to February 2019. Brazilian industry suffered a major blow in the first quarter of 2019 in three out of the four greatest economic categories (1. Food and beverages; 2. Industrial raw materials; 3. Capital goods; 4. Durable, semi-durable and non-durable consumer goods): food, motor vehicles and petroleum or biofuels derivatives (BRASIL, 2019b).

Unemployment rates in the country reached 12,7% (13,4 million people) in the first quarter of 2019 (January to March),

which represents an increase of 1,1% compared to the last quarter of 2018, when the rate was 11,6%. [...] The data also show that the number of idle citizens in Brazil registered a raise of 10,2% between the last quarter of 2018 and the first quarter of 2019, reaching 13,4 million (an increase of 1,2 million people) (BRASIL, 2019a).

**Table 2.** Unemployment rates in Brazil, quarterly comparison (2018-2019).

Last quarter (2018)	First quarter (2019)	Percentage
11,6%	12,7%	1,1%
12,2 million people	13,4 million people	An increase of 1,2 million people

Source: IBGE/PNAD (BRASIL, 2019a).

Regarding young people who are 18 to 24 years old, IBGE/PNAD (2019c) pointed that in the first quarter of 2019, 31,8% of the aforementioned group were idle. The 25 to 39 age range comes first, totaling 34,7%. An increase in firearm-related homicides, adolescent fertility rates, school evasion and unemployment among young people are determining factors in an attempt to understand the ‘*Nem Nem*’ generation, as well as contribute to the creation of public policies that can support young people in their life path.

## Final considerations

The analysis we carried out evidenced that young people represent one of the population segments that are most affected by social and, mainly, economical changes that have been happening since 2000. Youth empowerment and a focus on education have shaped one of the greatest concerns of those who rule the country. These two factors have been overrated by governments and considered to be the solution to social inequalities, poverty control, illiteracy reduction and the promotion of economic and social development.

The ‘*Nem Nem*’ percentage, which is 23% (Table 1), is one of the structural elements of the persistent inequality in Brazil. They are a generation haunted by high unemployment rates (around 31,8%) and they carry the burden of having to be the strongest ones in order to survive the free market competition. The NPM disseminates a business culture in schools, colleges and universities, in different professional areas and also regarding the way we live. In such cultural framework, young people must get ready to face a world of job insecurity and precarious working conditions.

The number of young people who fit the “*Nem Nem*” segment is likely to grow in Brazil if the public policies on education, employment and pension become more reductionist, after all, a lack of adequate policies leads to inequality in the labor market, which, in its turn, gives rise to social divisions, thus, perpetuating different forms of inequality.

We can also note that Brazilian young people’s education is based on the abilities and skills-based guidelines listed by law number 13.415/2017, which establishes the educational itineraries which compose high school education in Brazil. Law number 13.415/2017 has replaced the model in which there was only one type of curriculum by a more diversified and flexible version, composed by educational itineraries which must be organized by offering different curricular areas, namely: “I – languages and their technologies; II – mathematics

and its technologies; III – natural sciences and their technologies; IV – applied human and social sciences; and V – professional and technical education” (BRASIL, 2017).

The focus on developing skills is highlighted in many parts of the National Common Curricular Base (NCCB), which is justified by the fact that international assessment tests, especially the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which is coordinated by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), work through that perspective.

Another important matter is the fact that the NCCB for high school education claims that Brazil’s youth is plural. Therefore, it is necessary to offer young people an education that prepares them to be critical, autonomous and responsible. According to the document, it is up to high school institutions “[...] to provide young people with the chance of having experiences and processes which will ensure that they learn what is necessary to understand reality, face contemporary new challenges (whether social, economic or environmental) and make ethics-driven decisions” (BRASIL, 2018c, p. 463). That way, according to the NCCB, they will be protagonists in both their school process and life project. The abilities, skills and experiences brought up by the document aim to favor a basic preparation for work and citizenship which can enable young students to enter the increasingly unpredictable job market in an active and responsible way (BRASIL, 2018c), a logic of the human capital theory which has taken over the country.

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## Notes

<sup>i</sup> Translated by Elerson Cestaro Remundini – Coordinator Sector of Translation/Version of Scientific Articles, State University of Maringá (UEM), Brazil.

<sup>ii</sup> This time period was chosen due to the labor world-related transformations that took place in Brazilian society, such as the growth of the tertiary sector and the expansion of informatization (ANTUNES, 2018).

<sup>iii</sup> It is similar to the term NEET Generation (Not in education, employment or training). The only difference is that the Brazilian version does not include the word ‘training’.

<sup>iv</sup> It was through law number 11.692/2008 that people aged from 15 to 29 were acknowledged as young people, replacing the previous law (11.129/2005), whose conception of youth considered the age range from 18 to 24.

<sup>v</sup> Even though the government classifies as young those people aged from 15 to 29, IBGE considers the age group from 15 to 24 in its statistics. Yet, the 2010 census took into account the former age group.

<sup>vi</sup> That refers to the period prior to 2000.

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