

RIAL SEMINAR ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Rio de Janeiro, May 20 – 21, 2008

Panel 3 – Summary of presentation by Pró-Jovem, National Youth Secretariat of Brazil

“Investing in an integrated national policy, with programs and actions geared toward the comprehensive development of Brazilian youth, poses a dual challenge: creating the conditions necessary to break the reproductive cycle of inequalities, and restoring society’s hope in the future of Brazil. With that aim, in 2005 the federal government launched the National Youth Policy which, in addition to creating the National Youth Secretariat and the National Youth Council, led to the development of the National Program for Youth Inclusion: Education, Qualification, and Community Action – ProJovem” (PPI – ProJovem Urbano).

The National Program for Youth Inclusion targets young people aged from 18 to 24 who have completed fourth grade but did not finish their basic education. It was introduced gradually over 2005 and 2006 in Brazil’s state capitals, in cities in state capital metropolitan regions with populations of 200,000 or more, and in the Federal District.

It aims to provide young people with integral training by effectively linking higher levels of schooling, with the goal of pursuing basic education to its conclusion, professional qualifications, with the certification of initial training, and the pursuit of community actions. The program is intended to rescue young people’s career paths by assisting their reincorporation into formal education, setting them out on a process of training for the workplace, and encouraging participation in collective actions of public interest.

The course’s curriculum addresses these three dimensions – general education, professional training, and community action – in an interdisciplinary fashion. With a total teaching load of 1,600 hours (1,200 classroom and 400 non-classroom hours), the course lasts a total of 12 consecutive months. Structured into four Training Units, each with a duration of three months, the course materials are addressed in accordance with the following rubrics: Youth and the City, Youth and Work, Youth and Communication, Youth and Citizenship. The professional qualification through initial training comprises the following components: Professional Orientation Plan, General Technical Training, and Occupational Ranges. Each range covers four jobs, and each municipality can choose four ranges in accordance with its situation and job market expectations. The community action component is framed by the Community Action Plan (PLA), which is drawn up and implemented by the students as a whole with guidance from their teachers.

The great innovation of the ProJovem pedagogical project simultaneously poses the great challenge of ensuring the integration of these three dimensions and the development of an interdisciplinary approach. As an integrated pedagogical proposal and as a public policy bringing together several areas of government, ProJovem requires intersectoral management involving the National Youth Secretariat of the General Secretariat of the Office of the President of the Republic and the Ministries of Education, of Labor and Employment, and of Social Development and Fighting Hunger.

ProJovem students receive financial assistance in the amount of R\$100.00 (one hundred reais) a month, provided they attend 75% of the classroom activities and hand in 75% of the month’s planned assignments.

ProJovem has a Monitoring and Verification System that was created along with the program. Comprising seven federal universities (UFJF, UFMG, UNB, UFPA, UFPR, UFBA, UFPE), the system enables the permanent monitoring, oversight, and verification of the program. Two and a half years after its introduction, the results yielded by the Monitoring and Verification System indicate that the program

was correct as regards its target public, point to the need for a specific policy for those youths, and underscore the effectiveness and achievements of the Program.

235,585 young people enrolled in ProJovem. Of these, as of May 2008, 41,355 had been certified, 68,885 were concluding their studies, and 51,309 were actively participating.

It should be noted that one of the program's major achievements is in the levels of proficiency attained by the participating young people in the evaluations required for the conclusion of basic education. The participants report final proficiency levels in Portuguese language and mathematics that are similar to the results of the National Basic Education Verification System (SAEB) recorded among regular day-shift basic education pupils. Those results indicate the success of the integrated pedagogical project, along with the effectiveness of the teacher-training process. All ProJovem teachers take an initial 160-hour training course and follow 144 hours of continued training (12 hours a month throughout the duration of the course).

It should also be noted that several young people who have graduated from ProJovem are continuing their studies, in either the secondary or technical education systems.

The ProJovem Monitoring and Verification System also indicates that while there have been great achievements, there are also many challenges to be met. The Program's major challenge lies in recruiting young people and ensuring they persevere with the course. In light of the data collected in monitoring ProJovem, we are working on changes to the Urban ProJovem program.

Notable among the changes that are to be implemented are the expansion of the age limits for the potential public (18 to 29 years) and requiring that participants know how to read and write instead of having completed fourth grade. The length of the course will be increased to 18 months, with a teaching load of 2,000 hours, comprising 1,560 classroom and 440 non-classroom hours.

The basic characteristics of the pedagogical project will be maintained, with the integration of the three dimensions (basic education, professional qualification, and social and civic participation).

The Urban ProJovem program will be implemented in all municipalities with more than 200,000 inhabitants and, through the states of the Federation, in municipalities with fewer than 200,000 people. The launch is planned for August 2008 and, by 2010, it will have served 900,000 young people.

One of ProJovem's greatest achievements, perhaps the most outstanding one, is that it has been able to win the hearts and minds of its young participants as well as those of its administrators and teachers. The process of identification with the program reflects the feeling of belonging felt by everyone involved with it. An extract from a rap written by a young student from Paulista, Pernambuco, eloquently expresses the feelings of those young people.

“Knowledge never is a drag, if you want to learn run back,
Swap your gun for a pen,
To get peace and education.
Collective knowledge is what ProJovem preaches.
Without distinctions it teaches
Us all. And to bring it to an end,
Put a pencil and book in your hand.”

Eduardo Oliveira Silva
Paulista