



# The socio-educational proposal of the Military Regime present in Funabem and the First Forum on Minors

Maria Escolástica de Moura Santos\* and Mayara Macêdo Melo

Centro de Ciências da Educação, Universidade Federal do Piauí, Campus Ministro Petrônio Portella, Ininga, 64049-550, Teresina, Piauí, Brasil. \*Author for correspondence. E-mail: mayaramelo@ufpi.edu.br

**ABSTRACT.** This study aims to understand the relationship between work and education in the socio-educational proposal aimed at poor children and adolescents during the military regime, as expressed in the documents of the National Foundation for the Welfare of Minors (Funabem) and in the discourse of the authorities present at the first Forum on Minors. To this end, we have sought to identify the educational ends and means presented in this material, to analyze the relationship between this educational proposal and the ideology of national security, and to uncover the ideological link between the proposals for assistance and education for poor children and adolescents and the preparation of cheap labor for the labor market. This is a theoretical and documentary research based on the assumptions of historical and dialectical materialism, especially the works of Marx (2011), Engels (2009), and Mészáros (2011, 2015), to understand the origin and function of the state, with an emphasis on Lukács' (2007, 2013) postulates on ontological work. The literature review is based on Bazílio (1985), Becher (2011), Silva (2011), and Celestino (2015), among others, and the interpretation of the data is supported by Bardin's (2016) content analysis technique. The results highlight that poor children, referred to as minors, are considered dangerous or worthless, usually as a result of a maladjusted family, and therefore the individual must be corrected, not society. In this modeling process, education is central and is responsible for ensuring that these individuals adapt to the prevailing social order by training them in manual tasks, intending to transform them into adults who are useful to themselves and the nation.

**Keywords:** military dictatorship; work; education; poor childhood.

## Introduction

The subject of this study is the National Foundation for the Welfare of Minors - Funabem, created by Law No. 4.513 (1964), during the period of the military dictatorship, which was in force until the 1990s, when the Statute of the Child and Adolescent - ECA (Law No. 8.069, 1990) was enacted.

The main objective of this study is to gain insight into the interrelationship between work and education in Funabem's socio-educational activities. To achieve this, we sought to identify the educational objectives and methods set out in Funabem's documents; to analyze the relationship between Funabem's proposal and the ideology of national security that underpinned state policy during the military regime; and uncover the ideological link between the proposals for assistance and education for poor children and adolescents and the preparation of cheap labor for the labor market.

The study enabled us to comprehend the interrelationship between the categories of work, education, and poverty, with the education of poor children serving as our focal point and the period of the military regime in Brazil as our temporal frame. We posit that a comprehensive examination of Funabem's proposal for educating children deemed to be indigent and delinquent will facilitate our comprehension of the constrained, devoid, and perverse nature of education for the poor, which culminates in the most explicit denial of human development.

This is a theoretical and documentary study based on the theoretical and methodological assumptions of historical and dialectical materialism. From this perspective, the individual is considered to be a being constituted by multiple determinations, situated within the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity. The problems being analyzed must be treated as phenomena whose essence is not easily revealed. Consequently, it is necessary to consider contradictions and historicity, starting from the real to reach the concrete. This process involves the elevation of the real to the most elaborate level of consciousness, after which it must be returned to the real, now in a qualitatively superior condition.

This understanding led us to conduct a theoretical study of the ontological bases of work and education, based on Georg Lukács's *For an Ontology of Social Being* (2007, 2013). This allows us to conclude that we have conducted an onto-historical analysis. Lukács's ontology posits that work is the foundation of social beings. All societies, from primitive communities to the most developed forms of capitalism, have been organized on the basis of work. This is understood as the activity that synthesizes the subjective expression of individuals, which articulates what has been planned in their consciousness with the material objectivity of the world and gives rise to a previously non-existent product. Consequently, work is the act of producing the new. However, in class societies, work, which is the genesis of social beings, has become a painful, degrading, and annihilating activity for human potential because it is exploited.

In light of this perspective, we investigated the ontological genesis of the phenomenon under study. This entailed an initial examination of the origin and function of the modern state (Engels, 2009; Mészáros, 2011, 2015). Additionally, we examined the historical context surrounding the establishment of the Superior School of War (ESG) during the Vargas New State and the military dictatorship, when Funabem was created (Germano, 2011; Becher, 2011; Bazílio, 1985; Rossato, 2008). Furthermore, we explored the history of impoverished children, drawing upon Rizzini (1997), Venâncio (1999), Marcílio (2006), and Santos (2017).

In the second stage of the research, namely the documentary analysis, the discourse of political, legal, and religious authorities on the occasion of the First National Forum for Minors, held in the state of São Paulo in 1965, was analyzed. The proceedings of the Forum were published in 1966. The objective was to gain insight into the ideological link established between Funabem's educational proposal and its relationship with the job market. As a technique for analyzing this material, we opted for textual analysis guided by Moraes (2003), as it is a technique organized based on the following elements: de-structuring the texts, grouping similar parts, defining the relationship between the grouped elements, and categorization.

In the process of disassembling the texts, we read them to identify and extract parts that are of interest to the study. This allows us to make interpretations and construct meanings, considering the object of study. Subsequently, we proceeded to unitarize the data, which refers to a process of aggregating the clippings that express the content under investigation, taking into account the objectives that we set out to achieve. Following the unitarisation of the data, the information was organized into groups based on the degree of similarity between ideas and meanings, to facilitate the subsequent categorization stage. This stage represents a confrontation between the units established at the outset of the analysis process and subsequently leads to the formation of groups comprising similar components. In this manner, the aggregation of elements with analogous characteristics gives rise to the formation of categories, which must be designated and delineated in a manner that facilitates the discernment of the conceptual entity constituted by the elements, their meanings, and their significance, as it undergoes a process of increasing rigor and precision during its construction (Moraes, 2003).

The analytical categories of this research were divided into two. The first, entitled 'The concept of the poor child as a 'minor'', and the second, entitled 'What is the purpose of educating the poor child (considered a 'minor')?', were developed to address the research questions. Both categories were structured based on the semantic approximation of discourses centered on 'minors', with the support of two strands of elements that were similar. The outcome of this process was the production of demonstration tables, which enabled the analysis and interpretation of the data. These were contextualized within the appropriate historical framework, regarding the previously defined theory. This allowed us to establish a foundation for understanding Funabem and its relationship with dominant ideology during the so-called years of lead.

## **The role of Funabem in the ideology of national security**

To comprehend the objectives of a state-run education program for impoverished children and adolescents who are deprived of their liberty, it is essential to examine the genesis of the state and its function within class societies, as well as its relationship with circumstances of poverty.

In this regard, Engels (2009) posits that the advent of the state coincides with the emergence of social classes, and the dissolution of gentile communities, and is inherently linked to the necessity of regulating private property and validating the interests of individuals who, through force and persuasion, seek to override others. In this manner, the state amasses power and assumes the prerogative to make decisions that were previously made collectively in tribal communities.

In this sense, the state, in different societies and different historical moments, taking into account all the specificities, assumes the role of guaranteeing the privileges of the few to the detriment of the many. Mézaros (2011, 2015) asserts that the state appears to act in an attempt to reconcile the interests of the working majority and the exploiting minority, to guarantee social order and peace. To achieve this, the state acts by attempting to convince, attempting to balance conflicting interests, or by using coercion, employing all instruments, including violence, to ease conflicts and establish the prevailing order. This is why, in periods of crisis, the state is compelled to respond in ways that can oscillate between the most democratic and dictatorial formats.

About Brazil, Germano (2011) explains that the adoption of dictatorial models is a recurrent phenomenon. The deployment of the Armed Forces in times of crisis has been a recurring phenomenon since the mid-19th century. Consequently, the army has undergone a series of transformations, assuming distinct characteristics at each juncture of Brazil's tumultuous history. In the initial period, which encompasses the military interventions of 1888-1889 and 1930, the army assumed a more progressive character. In contrast, the interventions of 1937 and 1964 were characterized by an anti-democratic profile (Germano, 2000).

Before 1964, military intervention was of an emergency nature and limited duration. From that point onwards, the military perceived the genuine potential to assume direct and enduring control of the government and implemented an authoritarian and violent regime that endured for 21 years (1964 to 1985).

The political and social crisis that had its genesis in the coup reached a new level of intensity in the early 1960s. This was characterized by a deepening economic crisis, a widening rift between capital and labor, an increase in poverty, and a heightened class conflict. This was a pivotal moment in the organization and mobilization of urban and rural workers. A plethora of movements emerged, resulting in widespread chaos across the country. This scenario prompted not only the bourgeoisie to take action, but also the middle class and the military high command, who began to act on various fronts in an attempt to impede Congress and halt the implementation of reforms deemed fundamental (Germano, 2011).

At the time, Jânio Quadros, the president, attempted to address the crisis with the assistance of the International Monetary Fund. He implemented wage cuts and devalued the currency, among other measures that had the opposite effect to that intended, which provoked popular revolts and protests (Mazzeo, 1995).

In this context of crisis, several events were of particular significance in the context of the coup. These included the sergeants' revolt in September 1963, the rapid increase in inflation, the fight against agrarian reform, the recruitment of allies in uniform by the ruling classes, the movement known as the 'March of the Family with God for Freedom', and the incorporation of the ideology of national security. These events reached their zenith with the military intervention of 1964 (Germano, 2000).

The period was characterized by a high level of state censorship, persecution, torture, exile, and murder. The rate of inflation reached 80% per annum, while the growth in gross national product (GNP) was a mere 1.6% per annum, with investment rates in the country approaching zero. Consequently, the government implemented a series of measures, including a policy of recession, a deceleration in public works, and a diminution in subsidies for oil and essential food items, which curtailed opportunities for domestic credit and precipitated the demise of numerous enterprises (Germano, 2000).

It was only during the tenure of the Castello Branco government (1964-1967) that inflation reached 23%, yet the cost of living remained elevated. From 1968 to 1973, the country experienced a period of economic growth and prosperity, commonly referred to as the 'economic miracle'. The commencement of significant construction projects served to indicate the growth of Brazil and its economy. This period was characterized by significant growth for entrepreneurs and the bourgeoisie in general.

Nevertheless, the concentration of income remained conspicuous, as evidenced by the fact that only 4% of the Brazilian population, residing primarily in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, earned more than six minimum wages. This phenomenon gave rise to considerable social inequality. Consequently, the affluent class experienced an increase in their financial status, while the impoverished population witnessed a decline in their standard of living (Germano, 2000).

These developments had ramifications in several domains, including education, culture, communication, and social assistance. During this period, there was a notable increase in investment in technical and vocational education, reflecting a shift towards a more technical approach to learning. This illustrates the point made by Saviani (2008) that there is a connection between public education and the interests and requirements of the market.

The ideals of the War College (ESG), which were based on the ideology of national security, had a significant impact on the field of education. The ESG was established in 1949, a period also characterized by ideological conflicts and political instability in Brazil. Two distinct military ideologies emerged during this period. One advocated for the exclusive defense of the armed forces' actions in the external sphere, thereby failing to acknowledge the necessity of addressing domestic political issues. The other, however, espoused the view that, in certain instances, military intervention could be a viable option in national politics. This particular strand had no connection with the country's ruling classes and proposed an intense program of economic, political, and social reforms at the national level. Finally, a third strand of thought emerged, which advocated for a more prominent role for the armed forces in political and social matters. This current was comprised of more radical members of the military (Oliveira, 2010).

The national security ideology disseminated by the ESG sought to guarantee the prevalence of national development objectives, which were based on the US model and therefore committed to capitalism. This was in opposition to communism. Consequently, any group that espoused ideas contrary to the model adopted in the country and the objectives set should be repressed or annihilated. This illustrates the interventionist role of the armed forces in maintaining the established order.

The objective was to ensure control of all social sectors to achieve a unified perspective and action among all citizens based on the proposed development model. This process would be led by the national elites, as the ESG thinkers believed that only they would be able to lead the nation to achieve the Permanent National Goals, which would result in the common good. Therefore, the process of national elite economic development was consolidated, with institutional guarantees provided by the ESG. This sought to curb, suppress, or liquidate any form of manifestation contrary to the development model adopted in the country. In other words, communist propaganda and practices considered subversive were combated.

The consolidation of the regime's image following the 1964 coup was a significant undertaking, encompassing social assistance, education, and social communication. This involved the recruitment of professionals and propaganda agencies to mobilize public opinion in favor of the prevailing model, which was presented as strong and united. Additionally, the media was utilized to disseminate the image of a 'Great Brazil', or a strong, prosperous, and indivisible Brazil (Bazílio, 1985).

The ideology of national security disseminated by the ESG had a direct influence on the social policies implemented to provide stability to the regime, particularly concerning welfare. This was due to the simultaneous occurrence of economic growth and rising social inequality, which increased the number of children and young people living on the streets of major urban centers, as documented by Becher (2011). In this context, the National Foundation for the Welfare of Minors (Funabem) was established by Law No. 4.513 (1964), which linked it to the Ministry of Social Welfare and Assistance. The foundation's policy for the welfare of minors was linked to the policies of national development and national security. The foundation's objective was to provide care for minors who were socially helpless and/or engaged in delinquent activities. The foundation assisted minors in marginalized situations. Between 1967 and 1972, approximately 53,000 children were placed in boarding schools across the country (Becher, 2011).

Bazílio (1985) posits that the first significant documents on Funabem's policy are the 'New Policy for the Welfare of Minors' and the 'Guidelines and Norms for the Application of the Policy for the Welfare of Minors', dated January 28, 1966, and June 10, 1966, respectively. The documents aim to eliminate improvisation and implement a professional logic within the Foundation. The researcher posits that the fundamental needs of the 'minor' are now defined as health, love, understanding, education, recreation, and social security (Bazílio, 1985, p. 50). The use of medical terminology was employed to explain social phenomena, as it was more convenient for the system to identify the problem and propose therapeutic solutions.

One of Funabem's primary objectives was to develop a 'knowledge model' on the issue of 'minors'. To this end, it implemented activities from two fundamental perspectives: (1) the repair and prevention of situations that resulted in 'minors' exhibiting problematic behaviors through therapeutic-pedagogical measures, with the ultimate goal of reintegrating them into social life (Becher, 2011), and (2) the promotion of positive behaviors through the implementation of corrective measures.

For the Foundation's ideologues, the development of the social order was perceived as a deformity caused by the evolution of the industrial process and the modernization of society. Consequently, the 'minor' was seen as a victim of this process, as he was on the fringes of what was considered coherent (Becher, 2011).

Consequently, the assumption was made that individualized care would be beneficial. While economic issues were acknowledged, the fundamental premise of the discourse was to reinforce the family unit. The

causes of the abandonment of minors were understood to be rooted in family breakdown and disorganization, as well as promiscuity and other factors. In this regard, Bazílio (1985, p. 50) asserts that the

family is ultimately held responsible for the process of disintegration and the subsequent abandonment of children. No consideration is given to fundamental issues such as income distribution, social mobility, social welfare, access to employment, education, and hospitals as potential explanations for the problem. In addition to being morally judgmental, the proposal demonstrates a striking lack of understanding of the lived experiences and values of those from disadvantaged social backgrounds. It attempts to create programs or other structures to prepare for marriage, which is a practice that is not universally embraced or even understood.

This moralizing perspective, which is commonly present in dictatorial governments, has been denounced by other researchers who have studied Funabem. As Becher (2011) asserts, Funabem's actions are grounded in the triadic foundation of 'homeland, God, and family'. The documents are imbued with a functionalist perspective on society, wherein the social organization is conceived as a human body in need of treatment and cure for the ailment of marginalization, which is viewed as a disorder or illness. The prevailing view is that society is fundamentally benevolent, whereas marginalization is seen as a pathology that stems from the inability of the marginalized individual to adapt to societal norms (Bazílio, 1985). In this manner, palliative measures, asepsis, and the adaptation of misfits are regarded as the solution to the issue of rising violence in major urban areas.

The assumptions propagated by Funabem were based on a character of devotion and sacrifice, supported by faith, through moralizing discourses to spread them throughout the national territory. This implied that there was great concern about the delicate problem of the 'minor' (Becher, 2011).

The rationale behind the incorporation of adolescents into vocational workshops was predicated on the assumption that employment would catalyze their social reintegration, thereby conferring upon them a status as relevant subjects for the nation. In this context, the care units should provide educational and vocational training to ensure that adolescents are prepared for the job market. This approach would demonstrate that the Foundation's objective was to provide an educational environment, rather than a custodial one (Miranda, 2017).

From 1964 to 1974, Funabem assisted in 290.000 cases under state command. Between 1971 and 1973, 157.201 minors were assisted by 2.430 agencies. Out of these cases, more than half were concentrated in the southeastern region of Brazil, which is simultaneously the most economically developed and richest area of the country (Rossato, 2008).

These impressive numbers, in relation to the services provided, led to the conclusion that a more structured apparatus was required to ensure the continuity of services. Consequently, in the mid-1970s, the prevailing view was that the 1927 Juvenile Code should be revised. Over time, the discourse gained visibility and supporters, to find better ways to prevent and correct the agents of juvenile marginalization (Rossato, 2008).

The new Minors' Code, enacted by Law No. 6,697 (1979), highlights the Doctrine of the Irregular Situation. Consequently, children and adolescents classified as being in an illegal situation became subjects susceptible to intervention by the Minors' Court. This did not discriminate between the 'minor' offender and the abandoned 'minor' (Silva, 2011). The state policies that were developed subsequently, with a focus on poor children and adolescents, were supported by this code and proceeded in two directions: one from a preventative perspective and the other from an interventionist perspective, as will be presented below.

## **The prevailing conceptions of childhood poverty in the discourse of the authorities can be described as either dangerous or worthless.**

A bibliographical and documentary analysis reveals that the national policy for the welfare of minors unfolds gradually through two lines of action. The initial approach is therapeutic and comprises a series of intervention strategies devised to assist minors who are identified as requiring assistance and those exhibiting behaviors deemed antisocial. The second line of action is preventive and comprises programs designed to assist children and adolescents who are at risk of becoming marginalized. The scope of the interventionist line of action was more limited, as the welfare programs did not encompass a significant number of individuals identified as marginalized. In contrast, the preventive line was more expansive in scope, as the actions conducted in the community enabled the intervention to reach a greater number of beneficiaries. Under these two lines of action, Funabem categorizes its programs as both interventionist and preventive.

Following a prevailing trend observed in other historical periods, Funabem's proposal to assume responsibility for the issue of the 'minor' or the 'problem minor' perpetuates the hygienist perspective

pervasive in assistance and educational policies targeting impoverished children.

Historically, the actions directed at impoverished children, particularly those deemed to be indigent or delinquent, have proven to be ineffectual, devoid of substance, and, in numerous instances, profoundly misguided. The ideological charge expressed in these actions and the authorities' speeches adheres to the logic of blaming the individual, which is characteristic of the liberal perspective. In this context, those who are impoverished are held responsible for their circumstances, often portrayed as lacking the capacity to adapt and as both victims and perpetrators. This necessitates monitoring, guidance, and control, while society itself is viewed as requiring purification to mitigate the perceived threat posed by these individuals.

The perspective on children is informed by historical ideas that have evolved over time, leading to diverse interpretations contingent on social interests and objectives. This has resulted in the implementation of welfare policies tailored to specific social classes. In the case of impoverished and disadvantaged children, the concept of welfare is understood to encompass compensatory measures, devoid of any actions directed towards human emancipation (Dorigo & Nascimento, 2007).

In the context of the creation and implementation of Funabem, a conception of the dangerous poor child was constructed, designated as a 'minor', without a discussion of the circumstances that led to their marginalization and the lack of dignified living conditions in society. Additionally, there was no consideration of the potential solutions to address this problem.

The National Foundation for the Welfare of Minors (Funabem) emerged in the context of the ideology of national security, wherein social policies were linked to it. This was due to the fact that as the country developed economically, society grew in number and inequality. The number of young people and children living on the streets was rapidly increasing in major urban centers, a context that led to the creation of Law No. 4.513 (1964), which established Funabem to provide care for 'minors' in conditions of social disadvantage, whether or not associated with criminal practices.

During the period of military dictatorship, the treatment and welfare policies for impoverished children were merely supplementary, exclusionary, and discriminatory. This resulted in the state establishing a relationship of objectification with the 'minor'. The notion that the 'minor' was an object of national security was pervasive, as evidenced by the view that poor children were devoid of culture, in accordance with the societal model that prevailed at the time (Guimarães, 2017).

This perspective of the inferiority of poor children is evident in Funabem's documents. At the inaugural Forum for Minors, held in 1964, the keynote addresses from the authorities also reflected this perspective. The analysis revealed that of the 11 speeches published, six portrayed poor children as a threat, while five depicted them as needing assistance or of little value.

## **The child is perceived as dangerous**

Among the conceptions of the poor child expressed in the authorities' speeches during the First Forum on Minors, the one that appears most expressively is the idea of the child as dangerous. Of the six speeches that point in this direction, we have selected three to represent the following:

Children living in extreme poverty often witness their parents' serious moral problems, such as drunkenness and adultery, which are often the result of their conditions of poverty. Without the opportunity to be educated, these children will become future outcasts, when death does not take them prematurely (João Roma - Secretary of the Interior and Justice of the State of Pernambuco apud Governo do Estado de São Paulo, 1966, p. 23).

It is evident that slums and tenements serve as a breeding ground for maladjusted, destitute, and delinquent minors (Virgílio Távora - Governor of the State of Ceará apud Governo do Estado de São Paulo, 1966, p. 60, emphasis added).

[...] When the state government considers a child who has been abandoned or has gone astray or a child who is a 'juvenile delinquent', it attempts to view them in terms of their potential for the future and how they can contribute to their community (Alberto Carlos de Azevedo Klumb - General Director of Social Assistance of Rio Grande do Sul apud Governo do Estado de São Paulo, 1966, p. 88, emphasis added).

For these authorities, impoverished children are perceived as potentially dangerous individuals, outcasts, misfits, deviants, and delinquents. Consequently, they are subjected to various forms of social control and intervention to ensure their conformity and integration within the social order. The aforementioned authorities demonstrate an understanding of the conditions of deprivation in which these individuals find themselves, namely that they live in peripheral locations lacking basic services such as sanitation, health, and

security. These conditions render them particularly vulnerable. This profile is presented as a problem not only for the present but above all for the future. One of the primary concerns of these authorities was that these minors would become a long-term and uninterrupted financial burden on the state. Consequently, the objective is to transform these 'delinquent' children into economically active adults, enabling them to engage in profitable activities that will benefit themselves and the nation.

In contrast with the assertions made by Funabem, the proposal in question bears a closer resemblance to a prison model than an educational one. There is no interest in rehabilitating these children and adolescents through educational proposals that would facilitate some form of intellectual advancement. The objective is not to facilitate their integration into the job market through activities that can guarantee them economically and socially comfortable positions.

In addition to the imminent danger these children face, João Roma, who was Secretary of the Interior and Justice of the State of Pernambuco at the time, asserts that maladjustment is not solely manifested in criminal behavior or a hostile family environment. The locales in which these children reside, such as slums and tenements, are also depicted disparagingly, given that they lack the protection of the state's social policies.

Similarly, Virgílio Távora, then Governor of the State of Ceará, posits that the social behaviors, such as drunkenness and adultery, present in these 'maladjusted homes', are the cause of the deformation of the character of these children and adolescents. As a result, these children and adolescents became delinquents and offenders, and consequently, a danger to society.

As Guimarães (2017) asserts, the support provided to these children is welfare-based and discriminatory. This approach leads the state to view the 'minor' as an object of state ownership. The state assumed ownership of national security, thereby assuming the responsibility to take action on behalf of these children and from the perspective of the state. This approach disregards the particularity of each child and fails to address the root cause of the problem.

In accordance with the tenets of national security, as espoused by the ESG, the 'minor' is defined as a segment of society that is in discord with the prevailing ideals and seeks to challenge the established order. The so-called 'delinquent child' challenges the established order, making society heterogeneous, which is contrary to the views of heads of state and religious leaders.

As João Roma, Secretary of the Interior and Justice of the State of Pernambuco, states, the 'minor' is an individual facing economic hardship who, even in an unfavorable situation, poses a threat due to their role as a witness to family disputes and moral transgressions. This context created the conditions for these children to become involved in criminal activities, potentially leading to marginalization.

In addition to political figures, religious leaders invoked biblical passages to portray these children as wretched beings, whom they deemed to be in a state of helplessness. They asserted that these children could only hope to overcome this situation through the support of the state and institutions affiliated with religious traditions. Even though this situation was a direct result of the unequal social structure in which these families found themselves, this is not reflected in the speeches of these leaders. Conversely, this situation is denied based on superficial arguments, which disregard significant factors and reaffirm the proposal of the current government.

In the context of the prevailing perception that street children were already regarded as dangerous, as offenders and threats to the social order, they were also given another adjective, one that was created and internalized during the dictatorship. This was the designation of worthless, needy subjects.

## The child is seen as needy or worthless

This is a conception built up about poor children that sees them as worthless. This perspective was documented in the remarks of five of the eleven officials who spoke at the inaugural forum for minors. Two fragments are selected for closer examination as representative of this perspective.

The 'helpless minor', the 'unprotected minor', and the 'exceptional minor' who is 'unaware of politics but in need of assistance' (Júlio D'Elboux Guimarães, Secretary of Justice, apud Governo do Estado de São Paulo, 1966, p. 10, emphasis added).

Those who are capable of loving those who are perceived as unworthy are encouraged to participate. Dr. Mário undoubtedly exemplifies the category of elected officials who are willing to dedicate their entire lives to the service of those who are perceived as unworthy, as Father Américo used to say (Sérgio Muniz de Souza - Representative of the National Institute of Studies - INES apud Governo do Estado de São Paulo, 1966, p. 35, emphasis added).

The analysis revealed that, although the state of São Paulo accounts for a significant proportion of the children in such conditions, the movement of authorities from different regions of the country suggests that this is a pervasive problem in the country.

These speeches present another constructed idea about poor children, particularly those living on the streets. This idea refers to the personification of a helpless, needy, unprotected, and, above all, worthless subject. These individuals are perceived as helpless and lacking awareness of the causes of their misfortune, which is why they are considered to require state intervention to facilitate their transition to a more suitable future. This would be accomplished through Funabem, the institution tasked with correcting and adapting these individuals to the social order.

Another significant element identified in the speeches was the ascription of blame to the families, who were accused of exhibiting socially deviant behaviors. One of the proposals put forth by Adhemar Pereira de Barros, governor of the state of São Paulo at the time, was to place these children in more dignified homes than their own, to alleviate the problem. This illustrates the superficial nature of these measures, which not only ignore the disparate economic and social circumstances that have led to these families' situation of social vulnerability but also attempt to disguise the fact that they are victims of a societal model that is predicated on inequality and exclusion. Capitalist society can't exist without the laboring poor. Conversely, too many miserable people can put the system itself at risk, which is why assistance is often provided as a means of mitigating the problems of poverty, never eliminating them (Marx, 2011).

In this process of obfuscating the factors that precipitate social issues, religion becomes a source of support for the state, as it serves as a buffer against the distress experienced by those afflicted. It was therefore deemed appropriate to include religious representatives at this event, to imbue the government's proposal with a certain degree of humanity. This proposal sought, on the one hand, to disguise the underlying causes and, on the other, to rectify and penalize undesirable behavior.

In this proposal, education was also included as a means of molding these social subjects into a specific mold. Rather than being utilized as a tool for fostering critical thinking, it was employed as a vehicle for the creation of conformists. This would be achieved through a proposal that oscillated between welfare and training for manual tasks, to enable them to transition from a situation of extreme hardship to inclusion in the labor market, albeit under conditions of low value.

### **The socio-educational purpose of Funabem is to facilitate social adjustment through work.**

The analysis of the speeches in question reveals that the authorities responsible for structuring Funabem's educational guidelines were imbued with ideas of what an ideal society would be, based on a homogeneous ideology, in the sense of normality and moral values. Consequently, their approach to education can be characterized as compensatory and readjustment-oriented. The educational intention is based on the idea of teaching manual tasks to meet the needs of the labor market with its supply of cheap labor and to adjust to the model defined as acceptable.

The selection of these proposals reflects not only the image that has been constructed about impoverished children but also the idea that has been developed about their families and the social class to which they belong. This has led to the assumption that they occupy a position of inferiority in terms of the occupation to be developed and the social space to be occupied.

One of the most apparent educational objectives articulated in Funabem's proposal is the instruction of manual skills to the inmates. These are skills that are not highly esteemed in the context of socially recognized professions. As evidenced by the following excerpts, the majority of authorities who participated in the inaugural Juvenile Forum highlighted this issue.

In these facilities, as well as in other existing institutions, there will be a particular focus on industrial education, which encompasses the so-called 'noble arts'. [...] This will facilitate the training of future labor while simultaneously integrating the 'minor' into society, instilling in him the value and dignity of work and vocations for jobs (João Roma - Secretary of the Interior and Justice of the State of Pernambuco apud Governo do Estado de São Paulo, 1966, p. 25, emphasis added).

They must learn manual skills, learn to be useful to themselves, and learn a profession (Arthur Reis, Governor of the State of Amazonas, apud Governo do Estado de São Paulo, 1966, p. 112).



For these representatives, work was perceived as the optimal avenue for rehabilitating these children and adolescents. It was believed to confer dignity upon them while simultaneously generating social and financial returns for the state. Moreover, it would ensure control over these individuals and the maintenance of order. The selection of manual skills as a pedagogical focus was closely associated to address societal issues and promote social order. As Celestino (2015) asserts, work has a disciplinary and corrective nature, contributing to the acceptance of so-called 'minors' through the idea that they can be citizens who contribute to the nation's wealth.

In this way, Virgílio Távora, the governor of Ceará at the time, believed that work would provide the necessary conditions for the development of good character, ensuring both physical and mental integrity through the acquisition of skills relevant to the job market. Such an approach would ensure their ability to provide for themselves. Although the underlying principle was education through work, these ideas were complicated by other intentions, such as social hygiene and the transformation of the individual from a state of uselessness to a state of usefulness.

The state's approach was informed by the 1927 Minors' Code, which sought to regulate the work of children and adolescents. This legislation implied that the challenges faced by 'dangerous minors' were rooted in their circumstances of poverty. This legal framework was responsible for regulating punitive actions for minors who exhibited 'deviant' attitudes, as well as enlisting the support of religious institutions to ensure the provision of charitable services. Furthermore, it ascribed to work the role of safeguarding children and young people from idleness and vice, preventing their marginalization and preparing them for the transition to adulthood.

Bomfim (1987) elucidates the intricacies of this phenomenon by positing that the enactment of Bill 712, approved by the Chamber of Deputies, serves to reinforce the establishment of this practice. This legislation proposes the accessibility to the labor market for what are termed 'minors', to allow them to construct an honest life. This would be an indispensable factor for maintaining and preserving national security, thereby creating a greater possibility of retaining these young people in the workforce until they reach adulthood. In his own words:

Vocational workshops are utilized by students following their developmental stage. The available courses include mechanical fitting and turning, locksmithing, electric and oxyacetylene welding, automobile mechanics, car refinishing and spray painting, motor and transformer winding, typesetting, mechanical and architectural drawing, electrical installation, leather goods, air conditioning refrigeration, carpentry, wood turning, basic electronics, and auto school (Bomfim, 1987, p. 73).

As can be observed, the curriculum does not appear to prioritize intellectual development over the training of manual skills. Funabem's educational approach was designed to address behavioral issues by providing state-controlled training and education, to transform the individual into a capable member of society. In this context, the inmates would be prepared by engaging in work for society, rather than necessarily as critical participants in the process of social construction. Rather, they would be prepared to adapt to the social model in place.

From this perspective, the objective of educating to live together in society was to combine two key elements: training for manual labor and the internalization of moral values produced by hegemonic groups. In addition to instructing and guiding young people in their occupational pursuits, education also served to educate them with a view to what they understood as living together in society.

Among the speeches analyzed, only that of the public prosecutor Alcino de Paula Salazar refers to the necessity of training children for their active inclusion in society. Although he makes this reference in a biased manner, by associating this active role with productivity, he at least reveals that he does not view children as passive and useless beings who require adjustment. The remaining proposals advocate for an educational system that fosters social practices aligned with state authority and the rectification of antisocial behaviors that could impede the realization of the National Security ideology's objectives. Therefore, the objective was to rein in the social anomalies caused by the so-called needy, delinquent, and dangerous 'minor'.

In this vein, Arnaldo Prieto, then Secretary of Labor and Housing of Rio Grande do Sul, put forth the use of military methodologies to readjust young people and reintroduce them to life in society, taking into account data and previous experiences that, according to him, had been successful.

For Alcino de Paula Salazar, Attorney General of the Republic, representing the President of the Republic, the proposal was to make society harmonious. However, this would only be possible under two conditions.

One such condition was to prepare the minor for entry into the job market, as this would enable him to gain his dignity. The other was to internalize the government's ideas for maintaining and preserving order.

As Becher (2011) asserts, this educational practice, founded upon comprehensive care for minors, was designed to transform the context of violence that pervaded peripheral regions and to train young people who were equipped to navigate society by upholding the established order.

In light of the perception of abandoned minors as potential bandits, it was deemed insufficient to merely impart vocational skills that would yield financial returns for the state and the individual. Instead, it was imperative to instill in them the knowledge and skills necessary for navigating social interactions and interactions within the larger social structure. This was to be achieved through educational initiatives that drew upon military strategies. This educational approach is corrective, to ensure that the minor in question accepts the social position to which they have been assigned without question.

## Conclusion

This study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of Funabem's educational project. It has enabled us to gain insights into the relationship between work and education and to reflect on the educational intentions of the authoritarian government. We posit that its continued relevance lies in its status as a theoretical instrument that allows for reflection on the role that education for underprivileged children played in this social context, which was one of the most perverse in the history of our country, implemented between 1964 and 1985.

The findings of our study indicate that Funabem's proposal was predicated on the prevailing logic of the military dictatorship, namely the concepts of economic development and national security. Consequently, an analysis of the document that brings together the speeches of political and religious authorities from different regions of the country, delivered during the First National Forum for Minors, allows us to comprehend the conceptions of poor children and adolescents expressed by these representatives of the State, as well as to grasp the intended curriculum for these subjects when they were recruited by institutions along the lines of the State Foundation for the Welfare of Minors (Febens).

Two distinct perspectives on the poor child were identified. One perspective regards the minor as a needy individual devoid of value, necessitating political intervention by the state. The alternative perspective was to regard the 'minor' as a dangerous subject, a delinquent, and a threat to the social order. In both cases, the solution proposed was that education should play a leading role in repairing the damage caused.

Concerning the purpose of the educational proposal, which was deemed necessary by the authorities, it was linked to two perspectives. The first objective was to prepare minors for the labor market, with an emphasis on teaching them manual labor, an occupation with minimal social prestige. The second objective was to educate them on how to live in society, including instilling notions of civility, obedience to the state, and acceptance of their conditions of existence. This would result in individuals of 'lesser' value.

Funabem does not engage with the fundamental issues of the societal project of the time in a radical manner, nor could it, because doing so would be to condemn the very existence of the state, which is the sphere of action of the dominant classes. The focus is on subjectivity, as the objective is to alter the subjects while preserving the social order that contributes to the emergence of marginalization. In this sense, both social inequalities, which are typical of capitalist society, and state power appear to be naturalized, viewed as instances that must be preserved, with only partial modifications to guarantee the reinsertion of marginalized subjects. This entails integrating the marginalized into the very system that has excluded them.

## References

- Bardin, L. (2016). *Análise de conteúdo*. São Paulo, SP: Edições 70.
- Bazílio, L. C. (1985). *O menor e a ideologia de Segurança Nacional*. Belo Horizonte, MG: Veja-Novos.
- Becher, F. (2011). Os "menores" e a Funabem: influências da ditadura civil-militar Brasileira. In *Anais do XXVI Simpósio Nacional de História – ANPUH* [CD-ROM]. São Paulo, SP: ANPUH.
- Bomfim, M. S. (1987). *Egressos da FUNABEM: sua reintegração na sociedade* (Dissertação de Mestrado). Departamento de Psicologia Educacional, Instituto de Estudos Avançados em Educação, Fundação Getúlio Vargas, Rio de Janeiro.
- Celestino, S. (2015). *Entre a FUNABEM e o SINASE: a dialética do atendimento socioeducativo no Brasil* (Tese de Doutorado). Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro.

- Dorigo, H. G., & Nascimento, M. I. M. (2007). A concepção histórica sobre as crianças pequenas: as crianças pequenas: subsídios para pensar o futuro. *Educere et Educare Revista de Educação*, 2(3), 15-32.
- Engels, F. (2009). *A origem da família, da propriedade privada e do Estado*. São Paulo, SP: Escala Educacional.
- Germano, J. W. (2000). *Estado militar e educação no Brasil*. São Paulo, SP: Cortez.
- Germano, J. W. (2011). *Estado militar e educação da cultura*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Civilização Brasileira.
- Governo do Estado de São Paulo. (1966). *I Fórum nacional do menor*. São Paulo, SP: Imprensa Oficial do Estado.
- Guimarães, C. M. (2017). A história da atenção à criança e da infância no Brasil e o surgimento da creche e da pré-escola. *Revista Linhas*, 18(38), 80-142.
- Lei nº 4.513, de 1º de dezembro de 1964. (1964, 1º dezembro). Autoriza o Poder Executivo a criar a Fundação Nacional do Bem-Estar do Menor, a ela incorporando o patrimônio e as atribuições do Serviço de Assistência a Menores, e dá outras providências. Diário Oficial da União, Brasília.
- Lei nº 6.697, de 10 de outubro de 1979. (1979, 10 outubro). Institui o Código de Menores. Diário Oficial da União, Brasília.
- Lei nº 8.069, de 13 de julho 1990. (1990, 13 julho). Dispõe sobre o Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente e dá outras providências. Diário Oficial da União, Brasília.
- Lukács, G. (2007). *As bases ontológicas do pensamento e da atividade do homem*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: UFRJ.
- Lukács, G. (2013). *Para uma ontologia do ser social*. São Paulo, SP: Boitempo.
- Marcílio, M. L. (2006). *História social da criança abandonada* (2. ed.). São Paulo, SP: HUCITEC.
- Marx, K. (2011). Glosas críticas marginais ao artigo “O rei da Prússia e a reforma social”, de um prussiano. *Germinal: Marxismo e Educação em Debate*, 3(1), 142-155. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.9771/gmed.v3i1.9501>
- Mazzeo, A. C. (1995). *Sociologia política marxista*. Perdizes, SP: Cortez.
- Mészáros, I. (2011). *A ordem da reprodução sociometabólica do capital*. São Paulo, SP: Boitempo.
- Mészáros, I. (2015). *A montanha que devemos conquistar: reflexões acerca do estado*. São Paulo, SP: Boitempo.
- Miranda, H. (2017). A FUNABEM e a escrita de si: publicações institucionais e a produção do “bem-estar do menor”. *Leitura em Revista*, 7(11), 42-49.
- Moraes, R. (2003). Uma tempestade de luz: a compreensão possibilitada pela análise textual discursiva. *Ciência & Educação*, 9(2), 191-211. DOI: [doi.org/10.1590/S1516-73132003000200004](https://doi.org/10.1590/S1516-73132003000200004)
- Oliveira, N. D. (2010). Os primórdios da doutrina de segurança nacional: a escola superior de guerra. *Dossiê: História e Militarismo*, 29(2), 135-157.
- Rizzini, I. (1997). *O século perdido: raízes históricas das políticas públicas para a infância no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Petrobrás-BR; Ministério da Cultura; USU Ed. Universitária; Amais.
- Rossato, G. E. (2008). De Menor Marginalizado a Menino de Rua: o Estado de Bem-Estar Social no Brasil e o ideológico modo de definição da infância abandonada. *Acta Scientiarum. Human and Social Sciences*, 30(1), 17-24. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4025/actascihumansoc.v30i1.3208>
- Santos, M. E. M. (2017). *A educação social e a gestão da pobreza: gênese, desdobramentos e função no contexto da sociabilidade do capital em crise* (Tese de Doutorado). Universidade Federal do Ceará, Fortaleza.
- Saviani, D. (2008). O legado educacional do regime militar. *Caderno Cedess*, 28(76), 291-312. DOI: [doi.org/10.1590/S0101-32622008000300002](https://doi.org/10.1590/S0101-32622008000300002)
- Silva, G. M. (2011). Adolescente em conflito com a lei no Brasil: da situação irregular à proteção integral. *Revista Brasileira de História & Ciências Sociais*, 3(5), 33-43.
- Venâncio, R. P. (1999). *Famílias abandonadas*. Campinas, SP: Papirus.

## INFORMATIONS ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Maria Escolástica de Moura Santos:** PhD in Education from the Graduate Program in Brazilian Education at the Federal University of Ceará (2017); Master's Degree in Education and Degree in Pedagogy from the Federal University of Piauí. Adjunct Professor at the Federal University of Piauí, and at the Postgraduate Program in Education - PPGED/UFPI. She discusses topics related to the categories of Work, Human Formation, Education, and Poverty.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3407-9496>

E-mail: [escolastica.ufpi@yahoo.com.br](mailto:escolastica.ufpi@yahoo.com.br)

**Mayara Macêdo Melo:** MSc and PhD student in Nursing at the Postgraduate Program in Nursing (PPGENF/UFPI). Graduated in Nursing from Faculdade Maurício de Nassau, a specialist in Family Health with Teaching in Higher Education from Faculdade Evangélica do Meio Norte. Currently a substitute teacher at the State University of Maranhão (UEMA).

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8144-7653>

E-mail: [mayaramelo@ufpi.edu.br](mailto:mayaramelo@ufpi.edu.br)

Note:

**Maria Escolástica de Moura Santos** was responsible for preparing, conducting, and guiding the research for which the project was submitted to the Pro-Rectorate of Graduate Studies, Research and Innovation (PROPOPI) of the Federal University of Piauí, acting as the second author advisor during the period of the Voluntary Scientific Initiation Program, having carried out all the referential theoretical basis and offering full theoretical and practical support for the research that is the product of this manuscript. **Mayara Macêdo Melo** carried out the research under the guidance of the first author, reading and interpreting the data relating to the study.