

Poor Children as an Outsider Group and their Schooling

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ABSTRACT – Poor Children as an Outsider Group and their Schooling. The objective of this article is to discuss the social historical view of poor children as an outsider group and their schooling, based on an empirical paradigm developed by Norbert Elias to elaborate on the power relation problem. The questions presented here were analyzed based on a bibliographical study of the view of poverty as moral disqualification and the stigmatization of poor children. Next, based on a documental survey and historical inquiry, it was aimed to elucidate the role of public schooling in the stigmatization of poor children as an inferior group, especially in the province/state of Minas Gerais in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Keywords: Poor Children. Compulsory Schooling. Outsider.

RESUMO – Crianças Pobres como Grupo Outsider e a Participação da Escola. O objetivo é discutir a elaboração sócio-histórica das crianças pobres como grupo outsider e a participação da Escola neste processo, a partir da figuração estabelecidos-outsiders, paradigma empírico desenvolvido por Norbert Elias com função de problematizar relações de poder. Para análise das questões apresentadas, realizou-se estudos bibliográficos referentes ao entendimento da condição de pobreza como desqualificação moral e a estigmatização da criança pobre; em seguida, por meio de pesquisa documental e investigação histórica, buscou-se demonstrar a participação da escola pública na produção da infância pobre como grupo inferior, com destaque para a província/o estado de Minas Gerais no século XIX e início do XX.

Palavras-chave: Criança Pobre. Escola Obrigatória. Outsider.

Introduction

The established-outsider¹ figuration, an empirical paradigm developed by Norbert Elias, aims to explain the processing of power relations in human interdependence dynamics. Understood as a universal human theme, the established groups self-represent themselves as superiors and stigmatize the outsider group as of lesser human value, establishing unbalance of power with distinct gradients. In Elias' proposal, the established-outsider figuration is an explanatory model, independent from the scale of social unit and power differential in question, be it of ethnic-racial, gender, generation, social class origin etc. This way,

[...] However, even though the nature of the power sources on which the social superiority and the feeling of human superiority of the established group in relation to an outsider group can vary a lot, the established-outsider figuration itself shows, in several distinct contexts, in common and constant characteristic (Elias; Scotson, 2000, p. 22).

In the case of this text, it is aimed to discuss the factor of the material disadvantage as a condition of outsider. More specifically, to bring on some traces of the elaboration of the poor child as an inferior group and the participation schooling in this process. My main hypothesis is that the material living inequalities of childhood acquire prominence in the context of elaboration of the society of equality of rights since the ends of the 18th century. Besides, it is associated with the expansion of the debates on the establishment of the public school and the schooling obligation from the 19th century on.

First, for this analysis, it is necessary to stress that the condition of poverty has been felt in distinct ways along history. Besides, its characterization as a marginal condition cannot be naturalized, as it is formed in the socio-historical process of development of the bourgeois society and the market economy, when the fact of being poor becomes a social and political problem. In this context, the choice for wealth as source of power of a social class on another was radically differentiated from the tradition of the noble ancestry as exclusive resource of power, in the context of the monarchic governments, where the wealth was made in result of the situation of nobility itself, as well as when power had precedence over profit (Polanyi, 1997).

Another aspect refers to childhood. The acts of inferiority of the poor and indigent child cannot be naturalized either. It was from the 16th century on that Church and State developed in an increasingly systematic way some initiatives aiming to mitigate the condition of poverty in childhood, what contributed for the assignment of stigma of inferiority or even moral connotation, such as disfavored, truant, offender. It is highlighted, also, the institutionalization of the public and compulsory schooling for all the children since the 19th century, and the difficulties faced by the poor families to send their children, in general, due to the need of their work. In this context, the qualification of unschooled or il-

literate child started to compose the specter of inferiority stigma of this social group.

In which way the model of established-outsider figuration developed by Elias can contribute for the discussion of the stigmatization of poor childhood as an inferior group, specially the school-age child? In Elias and Scotson's proposal (2000) the established-outsider figuration has structural constants, one of them being the stigmatization. The established groups tend to assign to the other group disqualifying, bad and anomie characteristics, (unreliable, troublemaker, undisciplined, dirty etc.) to reinforce its quality of good and the belief that they are better, a movement to which Elias names as socio-dynamics of stigmatization.

The more a group is established in a position of power, the greater the efficacy of the stigmatization; however, this dynamic happens in a tense way due to the constant threat of counter stigmatization by the outsiders. The analysis of an established-outsider figuration demands the investigation concerning the level of interdependence between the social groups, as the greater this is, the greater also the decrease of unequal dependence and the increase of the possibility of shift in the balance of power in favor of the outsiders.

Another constant is the need of maintenance of the group cohesion and identification between the established ones, so that the more this affirms itself, the more the other one destabilizes. Elias emphasizes that this process demands subjection to the conducts and values of the group as required to differentiate from the outsiders. The presence of the human inferiority feeling by the outsider group is also observed as a constant.

In the case of the factor to be analyzed here, e. e. economic advantage, it is necessary to inquiry on the historical process of constitution of the economic inequality of a group or a society to understand how the stigmatization and the inferiority were processed, stressing that the economic disadvantage can also be associated to other factors, like the ethnic-racial origin. In the Brazilian case, the stigmatization of black and poor people as an inferior group favored their condition of social marginality.

For the analysis of these points, the text was organized in two items. In the first one, it is discussed, from the specialized bibliography, some questions related to the understanding of the poverty condition as physical and moral disqualification and the stigmatization of the poor child. Next, by means of a historical inquiry², it is intended to demonstrate the schooling participation in the production of the poor childhood as an inferior group, with major prominence to the province/state of Minas Gerais.

Economic Advantage as a Condition of Superiority and the Production of Poor Childhood with Outsider Group

The establishment of the economic advantage as a source of power was developed mainly with the mercantilism, the industrialism and the organization of the market economy, in a historical process in which, since the 15th and 16th centuries, the necessary elements for the maintenance of the human life were for sale, namely, land, work and money (Polanyi, 1997). In this context, it was produced the association between poverty condition and non-work, and the danger of uncontrolled poverty was disseminated, in opposition to the Christian conception of the condition of being poor (Geremek, 1987).

According to Geremek (1987), from the 16th century on it happened, in the European context with extension to the colonies, a higher rationalization in the treatment of poverty expressed in two attitudes - the presence of the State in the assistance to the poor people and the prohibition of begging regulated by the municipalities. These attitudes also demonstrate that a criminalization of poverty was in course, as well as a valuation of work as way of social insertion, generating even higher rigor and control in the treatment of the needy people, what culminated in the elaboration of stigmas in relation to poor people who did not work, as truants and wanderers.

In Europe, since the legislation for regulation of poor people of the 16th and 17th centuries, sending children of beggars as apprentices to craftsmen workshops was prescribed to prevent beggary. Geremek (1987) also claims that in the 16th century Holland, reformatories were founded for children with socio-educational motivations through work, being this model applied in other localities. In England, in the first half of the 18th century, there were 200 workhouses, institutions that sheltered poor adults and children, offering food and housing in exchange for work. Another experience for prevention of beggary was developed in Lassalian schools, in France, with emphasis basically on the learning of the Christian doctrine, reading, writing, and arithmetic, including commercial and office uses (Manacorda, 1989).

From the end of the 18th century on, the problem of impoverishment was heavily discussed. A reference of the time for the discussions on poverty was Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). According to this social reformer, poverty is the state of the one who, in order to survive, needs to work, and the destitution is the state of the one who, devoid of all property, cannot work or the income with his work is not sufficient for his maintenance (Bentham, 1979). In Marx (1975), on the bloody legislation or legislation against the dispossessed, established in England in the 16th century, it is observed distinctions of the situation of poverty, or even shades of the stigmatization: non-owners, but workers and honest individuals, and those who refuse to work and end up being an economic burden and a social danger.

In this context, it is conceived the concept in which the dependence of the poor in relation to others, either from the boss or from the

State assistance, makes him incapable of living a rational life, or even having significant experiences in order to constitute a political body. The ownership of property began to have moral qualities, as it is amenable to being obtained through honest work.

The social crisis of the end of the 19th century, due to the increasing mobilization of the workers, reinforced the stigma in relation to the poor population. George Rudé (1991) comments how the derogatory associations concerning the rebels were almost unanimous, even on the part of liberal historians and serious scholars of the grassroots movements. Words like *mob*, *scum*, *criminal*, *scoundrel*, *wanderer*, *trash of the society*, *wild* are examples of some of the adjectives assigned to the people in the sense of disqualifying them. In this context, representatives of the State, industrial elites and owners started to invest in social policies like the labor legislation. There was also an increasing appeal to the schooling of children as a factor of prevention of poverty and marginality, therefore facilitating the social progress, and the emergence of institutions for the assistance of the disfavored childhood, as it was called then.

It is stressed that in the case of children, their marginal condition started previously to their social condition, as for several centuries childhood as a generation was presented in a marginal way in the society, having been Philippe Ariès (1987), one of the pioneers in the studies of the history of childhood, who demonstrated such fact. In the perspective of the generational relations, from the 17th century on there were shifts in the direction of the development of the sensitivities of the adults in relation to the children, having favored the awareness of the generational differences and the need to take care and protect the childhood. This context made possible the elaboration of the existence of the disfavored child in the scope of the representations of a desired childhood.

It is observed that the word *disfavored* is found in the documents and legislation to refer to the children in marginal situations. The prefix *des* assigns a meaning to this situation - not being valid according to the physical, material, cultural point of view. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate that the meaning of *having validity* in a society is a historical construction. Specifically, from the 19th century on, the stigma of disfavored child became assigned to the child without any economic and social validity, that is, the poor, abandoned or offender child (Veiga, 2012).

However, it is important to emphasize that, in general, their situation is understood as of transitory marginality and the individual or public actions are done in the sense of their social insertion, or better, social integration through work, by the production of validity or utility. Therefore, the issue of the inclusion or exclusion of the marginal childhood was integrated to the idea of social utility or validity through work. Yet, according to Jean-Claude Schmitt (1990, p. 420), "At each time, there is, therefore, a demarcation line that defines the integration or the rejection of the marginals. It is around it that the changeable criterion, of social 'utility', is established".

The conception of education for socially marginalized children was, therefore, characterized by the appeal to education through work, aimed to social utility. However, this only makes sense in the context in which there was an increase of the number of abandoned children, as historically the children's work was the rule in the poor classes. Or, in the words of Thompson (1987, p. 203), "The children's work was not a novelty. Children were an intrinsic part of the industrial and agricultural economy previously to 1780, and it remained as such until being rescued by the school". The author also highlights that the predominant form of children work was the domestic one, within the scope of the family economy. With the development of the industrial system, it became frequent the exploration of children's work, that, however, will be regulated and combined with the obligation of the school attendance (Engels, 1985). The incorporation of the moral content to the work in the education of poor and abandoned children was closely related with the development of the urban life, the risks of criminality and the "[...] utilitarian concern with qualifying the children for the industrial occupations" (Thompson, 1987, p. 261).

In the colonial Brazil, the institutional association between a poor child and work can be found in the *Ordenações Filipinas*³ that ruled on poor orphans. In 1731 the position of Judge of orphans was created with the task of taking care of the destiny of orphan children and youth, poor or not. In the case of the poor orphans from 7 years old on, they could be given *a soldada*, that is, handed over to tutors who would pay a price for their work, being the goal to restrain the slavery of children. But the law also commands also that the tutors make the child to learn the craft of their father, working in the crops or mechanical crafts (Ordenações Filipinas, 1985b).

The same legislation included the existence of hospitals and shelters to raise foundlings, orphan and/or abandoned children who were children of religious and married women "[...] so that the children do not die due to the lack of raising" (Ordenações Filipinas, 1985a, p. 211). It also claims that the Municipal Councils provide the upbringing, education and destination of exposed children, therefore the State is already present in the assistance policies since those times, although associated with the Church. Maria Luiza Marcílio (1998) observes that in Portugal, differently from other European countries, and for extension in the colonies, since the 16th century the municipality was obliged to keep orphans and disfavored children. Thus, in the colony, the baby hatches were created in *Santas Casas de Misericórdia*, as well as shelters for girls in agreement with the Municipal Councils.

In the 19th century, during the term of the constitutional monarchy, the *Santas Casas de Misericórdia* and the hatches were controlled and subsidized by the provincial chambers. There were also other initiatives for the professionalization of poor boys, as it is the case of São Joaquim Seminary in Rio de Janeiro. The decree from December 12, 1831 (Brasil, 1878) provides status to the seminary created in the court for the maintenance and education of orphan and disfavored boys:

Being obligation of the government, independent of the feelings of humanity, to take care of the maintenance and education of the orphan and disfavored boys, so that, conveniently educated and having honest professions, they can be later useful to themselves and the nation, that profits a lot with good manners and work [...] (Brasil, 1878, p. 61).

In the statutes of the institution, chapter I, its function is reaffirmed:

The São Joaquim seminary is an establishment of public charity, aimed to gather up orphan and disfavored boys, so that they can be there educated conveniently, and qualified to the exercise of honest and beneficial tasks (Brasil, 1878, p. 62).

Throughout the 19th century, several other institutions were created with the same purpose to conciliate teaching and learning of a craft. We can highlight the regulation, from 1840 on, of the education of orphans and babies found in baby hatches in Arsenals of War and of the Navy as apprentice children, the creation of agricultural colonies soon after the *Lei do Ventre Livre* (Brasil, 1871) [providing that all children born from slaves who were pregnant at the time would be free since birth], of schools of arts and crafts, patronages and agricultural institutes and vocational schools in the 20th century (Marcílio, 1998). It is important to stress that, despite the long tradition of the presence of the State in the assistance to the disfavored childhood, this action was a partnership with religious institutions, individual initiative, philanthropic institutions, founded by doctors and jurists among others, making to emerge a range of institutions: asylums, schools of orphans, houses for handicraftsmen learners, philanthropic associations etc.

In the early Republican decades, the Code of Minors of 1927 (Brasil, 1927) systemizes and unifies at national level the assistance to abandoned children and poor orphans. In it, the assistance is defined for those who are under the age of 18, being them poor who are abandoned, truants and/or offenders (Brasil, 1927). Even though the expression *minor* to refer to the underaged, was already present in previous legislation (Passetti, 1995), we can say that the Code of 1927, when named as *Code of Minors* and dealing with aspects referring to disfavored children, consolidated the association of the word minor with poor, abandoned, truant and/or offender children, and even to children submitted to children's work, assigning to the children of this social grouping the stigma of bad and of inferiority. The Code also naturalized the learning of a craft and the work as factors of regeneration and elaboration of social validity. The surprising aspect is that in the school documentation, the word minor was also found as referring to the poor school children, as we will see.

Poor Students as Inferior Group

The Constitution guarantees the free of cost Primary Teaching to all citizens. This healthy disposition regarding

the poor boys will be almost illusory if the government is not authorized to spend some amount of money: with the supply of paper, books and compendiums, as well as other objects of little value that are indispensable. What is the matter if these *unfortunates* attend the schools if all the means to acquire primary teaching fail? And please note that such individuals are the ones who must leave schools the earlier, so that they can in a timely way dedicate themselves to the use of life, of which they will take the means of subsistence (Report of the President of the Province, 1837, p. 8, emphasis added).

With the establishment of the constitutional monarchy in 1822, it was guaranteed in the Constitution of 1824 (Brasil, 1937), article 179, the right of the citizens to attend school, being that from the Additional Act of 1834, the Provincial Chambers were in charge of the legislation on the primary teaching. But even before this date it is possible to find in the school writings the expression *poor student*, more recurrent in the maps of students' attendance prepared by the teachers and in the reports of the school inspectors and presidents of province⁴.

For instance, in the list of a private teacher of Barra do Saboeiro from December 12, 1831, 3 students attend for free, 1 of them is an orphan and two other ones are registered with the name of the mother only⁵; in another list from November 24, 1832, Paraopeba, 3 students are children of blacks, two are registered with the name of the mothers and one with the name of the father, *preto forro* [freed black slave]⁶; in the Sabará list, 1832, among the non-attendant students, there are references to a godson, nephews, besides the register as poor and black poor⁷, or still in the list of the private teacher José Carlos Ferreira, of Cachoeira do Campo, 2 students are slaves (5 and 7 years old), one is an orphan (14 years old) and one was found in a baby hatch (14 years old)⁸.

In the report of a literary delegate from May 12, 1844, it can be found, in annex 01, maps of attendance with commentaries by the delegate on lessons (schools) visited. For instance, in the map of the lesson of Vila da Conceição do Serro, out of 32 students, 4 are highlighted as poor or very poor. In the commentaries on 2 other lessons, being one also from Serro, the delegate registers that, according to the teacher, there are 116 enrolled boys and 90 attend school, but that in the day of his visit only 33 were present. Among them, I highlight the register of 2 children: *Manuel Casemiro, 10 years old, pants and shirt of a poor person, as his educator also is poor; Alexandre Pereira da Cruz, 13 years old, jaqueta de bastão, torn cotton shirt, mended pants, his mother lives sparingly*⁹.

Although the institutionalization of the public primary school since the beginning of the 19th century, it was established in a very precarious way, since it was not fully acknowledged by the provincial governments. They had lots of problems with the lack of appropriate buildings, school materials and objects, and teachers. Most of the times what is observed is improvisation and precariousness of all order in the teaching conditions. On the other hand, there are several registers of poverty of the population and the need of children's work on the part

of the families. To minimize the problems, the provincial government sought partnerships for the maintenance of the schools. For instance, requesting the donation of materials and school buildings through subscriptions, the creation of *caixas escolares* [fund raising] and municipal funds, as it can be identified in the legislation. It is specially highlighted the regulation of subventions for private lessons, whose teachers received *poor students*. This new possibility introduced in the school quotidian and in the children's life a new qualification - the *poor student*, especially due to the new routine of the teacher of having to elaborate the list of poor students to order materials and funding, as it was claimed in the regulation.

The receiving of school materials and objects for poor students was understood as a benefit granted by several provincial laws. There are several memos from teachers requesting material and some reports from presidents of the province registering the purchase and delivery of *indispensable objects to the poor students*, besides constant references that the purchase of such objects should be reduced to the minimal cost. In the report presented by the Public Teaching General Director of March 4, 1859¹⁰, he claims that the public funds are loaded with *expenditures for the hiring of teachers, school houses and the supply of paper, fountain pens and ink to the poor students, and often for the necessary compendiums, desks and benches*. Given the volume of expenses, he suggests that the government continues with *aid to the poor*, but that the houses, the desks and the seats would have to be responsibility of the students' parents.

In turn, concerning the regulation of subsidies to private lessons, there was a significant variation of the norms, especially concerning the distance in relation to the localization of the public schools. During the imperial period, the subventions oscillated between 120\$000 and 250\$000 per year per student, being that some legislation established the limit of students per private lesson. The Act 1769 of April 4, 1871 (Minas Gerais, 1871, art. 1º § 9º) is more accurate in relation to the subject, claiming that the president of the province is authorized to “[...] subsidize the private school that is located farther than 12 km from the public school with the grant of one thousand *reis* per month for each poor student who is admitted, until the maximum of 25. When this number is exceeded, a public school will be created there”. In general, the subvention was requested by the parents, or even referred by the inspectors. In a correspondence between inspectors of teaching of January 3, 1872, there is a request for the creation of a public school, *as the existent one is private and the poor families must place their children there, being difficult to pay for the lesson*¹¹.

From the 1850s on, it was also encouraged the practice of subscriptions for the purchase of objects aimed to the poor, being that in regulation 44, of Act 960 of June 5, 1858 (Minas Gerais, 1860), there is the guarantee that the names of the subscribers would be published by the Press, a characteristic of the philanthropic practices of the time as a way of assigning visibility and confirm the established group. Other

documents indicate to us the increase of the discussions relative to the need of foundation of associations or societies of beneficence, or even a provincial tax to help the *poor students*. In a report of the public teaching of June 14, 1865, the reporters discuss the issue of the gratuitousness of education and the European example of maintenance of beneficence associations, as a remedy for the problem of the children who do not attend the school *for not having anything to dress*. In a letter from the General Inspectorship of Teaching, from July of 1873, for the delegates, the inspector speaks of the necessity to recur to the *patriotism of the inhabitants* to help the destitute boys and *to provide a greater development to the teaching, that interests both to the government and to the people*¹².

The Regulation 84 of Act 2476 of 1879 rules the functioning of the *caixas escolares* in each parish to “[...] help the destitute boys, providing to them the means to learn and, as well, to acquire the necessary furniture for the school and to supply books and utensils to the poor students” (Minas Gerais, 1879, p. 17). The *caixa escolar* would be kept with the money from fines, donations and subscriptions to be promoted by the members of the parochial councils. It is observed that with the excuse of helping the poor students, the funds of the *caixas escolares* would also have to the school furniture.

According to the registers, it seems that such initiative did not generate the expected benefits. In a report from August 2, 1883¹³, the president of the province claims that *he is not able to achieve the compulsory schooling without going to the aid of the parents who, due to poverty state, cannot take their children to school*. It is added that the biggest difficulty for the expansion of education is the financial problem of the disfavored school class. In regulation n. 100 of 1883 (Minas Gerais, 1883), it was created the provincial school fund, which was not enough either. In a report from August 1, 1885¹⁴, the vice-president of the province claims that the quota of 10:000\$000 for the rental of houses and supply of books and objects for poor boys was insufficient and that the municipal school fund did not present results.

Besides the problems with facilities and school objects, there were problems with feeding and clothing, as it is verified in the correspondence of a delegate to the president of the province in December 14, 1839¹⁵. In it, the delegate comments that the small number of students is due to *the utmost poverty of some parents, to the point that they do not provide to their children foods and clothes in the existing schools, that this could be removed if the Provincial Chamber ordered to supply foods that were absolutely indispensable to these unhappy boys, who for similar reason are condemned to perpetual ignorance*.

Several other documents certify the lack of clothes and feeding as reason for the lack of attendance of the students. In a visit report to a lesson (school), of May 12, 1844¹⁶, the delegate says that several boys miss the lesson *due to the extreme poverty, some have to chop wood, others must look for provisions for their parents, while others, at last, do not have clothes*. On the students who attended, he says that almost all wore sleeveless shirt, a few were coats and all were bare foot. In relation to the

lack of attendance due to the need to work, there were several registers as well. In June 3, 1836¹⁷ the delegate claims in his report that the lack of advancing of the teaching is due to the fact that there is a great number of poor parents who are *obliged to distract their children in the life tasks*, others claim that the children help in the harvest and the weeding.

In the report of April 22, 1868¹⁸, the delegate also claims that the main cause of lack of attendance is poverty, as the *poor families need to use their underage children, and other times they do not have the means to buy decent clothes to send them to the school*. Others claim that the poor class sees their children more like a work assistant and that the parents question the usefulness of the school and its practical advantages. The precariousness with which the public and compulsory schooling was established since the imperial times contributed significantly to the stigmatization of poor children, taking into consideration that, despite the very irregular attendance, the *unfortunates* and *unhappy* children were in general the majority in the public lessons of primary teaching (Schueler, 1999; Veiga, 2008).

It was not possible to verify the same in the early years of the Republic. In the end of the 19th century, school reforms of the primary education introduced the *Grupo Escolar* as a new model of school, mainly characterized by the serialization and new management dynamics with the introduction of the school principal. In the Republican context, it is possible to observe a higher presence of children from the middle layers, as well as a more differentiated offer of public school, either in relation to its localization, whether urban or rural, either in the way of organization of the school serialization (*grupos escolares*, isolated schools, gathered schools), either in the management and financing, whether municipal or state.

Despite the protagonism of the *Grupos Escolares* in the state reforms as an icon of modernity (Vidal, 2006) and as affirmation of local political powers, more recent studies have been demonstrating that there was a significant difference between offers of *Grupos Escolares* and Isolated Schools, with a wide predominance of the latter (Souza; Silva; Sá, 2013). What we want to call attention to here is that, paradoxically, the Republican experience deepened the school inequalities and the visibility of the poor children, in view of the attendance of children from the middle classes in the *Grupos Escolares* and the expansion of children's work provided by the urban development (Hahner, 1993).

As a possibility of discussion of this question, I highlight the actions involving the *Caixas Escolares*. In the case of Minas Gerais, the legislation is vast and confirms the intention already registered in the imperial period of aid to the poor students. However, in the Republican period this institution expresses in a more actual way the tensions of the establishment of societies of law, in view of two recently established situations (despite being in the end of the imperial period), but with wide repercussion in the organization of the Republic, which are: the requirement to know to read and write to vote and to be voted (1881) and the abolishment of slavery (1888).

In campaign for the establishment of a *Caixa Escolar* in Araguary, Minas Gerais, the principal of town's *Grupo Escolar*, Mario da Silva Pereira, distributed a letter to the population in December 5, 1909 in which he claimed,

The modern public education is and must basically be democratic. The school is an institution open to all social classes that gathered and leveled by the same protection with which the law sanctioned the equality of all, will receive equally, the appropriate teaching to the diverse tasks of life, the same uniform and systematic education, without privileges, without personal distinctions other than those deriving from the individual capacity and commitment [...] it is not enough having a programmed unit of education and the freedom of school enrollment; it is still necessary that, beside moral and pedagogical equality of education, the material equality needed in the external conditions of the learners is kept [...] *it is necessary to destroy in the school the apparent material inequalities, that have for the child unquestionable prestige* [...]. In the coexistence of boys from diverse social conditions, *it is easy to observe the ascendancy that, naturally and gradually, accentuates from the rich over the poor*, and is this exactly what becomes necessary to prevent in the school [...] it will be prevented the discouraging and harmful confrontation, that one can make, *from the humble situation of the poor people, usually poorly dressed and underfed, with the happy and wealthy situation of those favored by fortune*¹⁹ (Testimony of Mario da Silva Pereira, principal of the *Grupo Escolar*, 1909, emphasis added).

The testimony is revealing of the established-outsider figuration. It is possible to notice the remarkable differential of power between poor and wealthy children as part of the establishment of the public schools. As we saw, this fact extends from the imperial times, as the school socialization itself revealed how complex is the task of answering to the social heterogeneity in an egalitarian way²⁰.

In Elias' approach, one should inquire on the strategies of elaboration of power differentials by means of varied questions. How the superior group makes the other group to feel inferior due to the absence of certain qualities? How is the belief that they are better kept among them? Which are the means to impose this belief of superiority? Which resources or sources of power are put into action for a group to affirm its superiority or disdain in relation to another group? Which resources of power allow the superior group to affirm its superiority and to cast a stigma on the others as inferior people? (Elias; Scotson, 2000).

In the account of the principal of the Araguary *Grupo Escolar*, the unbalance of power was portrayed in the contrast established between *happiness* of the rich children and the stigma of inferiority assigned to the humble *unhappy poor*. In this case, the social disqualification was not achieved by disdain, but by evoking a feeling of pity.

In Minas Gerais, the legislation of the *Caixa Escolar* during the early years of the Republic suffered some changes. In the internal regulation of the *Grupos Escolares* e Isolated Schools from 1907, the *Caixa Escolar* had as a goal to take care of small expenditures and to assist the poor students, having as a source of income donations, money collection in parties and bazars and, curiously, grants not paid to absentee teachers and staff²¹. There are reports of spontaneous donations made by inhabitants, in general represented as being acts of patriotism and, just like in the imperial times, as a landmark of the place of the established. In 1908, the inspector of Muzambinho registers that

Colonel Arantes is an impartial, appraised young man, so dedicated to education that he annually supplies to the poor students of the public schools of the town school clothes and utensils in the amount of 500\$000, as I was informed by the teachers themselves²². It is an act of patriotism to be commended (Utterance from the inspector of Muzambinho, 1908).

The existence of this institution shows the incompetence of the State in financing the public education, but mainly favored the tensioning between the children included in the *Caixa Escolar* and children who did not need it. In July 12, 1913, there is an account on the supply of daily school meal to the poor students of Santa Rita do Sapucaí *Grupo Escolar*, with money proceeding from the *Caixa Escolar*²³. Another document registers a festive session of the *Caixa Escolar* of the *Grupo Escolar* of Mateus Leme, whose main goal is to help poor students, having received a wide coverage from the local press, and, therefore, favoring the visibility of the condition of inferiority of the benefited children. The inspector reports, *attending, besides several members, 'several other distinguished people', it was distributed clothes to the minimally poor students and prizes to those who were more distinguished for the attendance to class and good behavior*²⁴.

In the 1920s, in full context of campaigns to fight illiteracy, a regulation calls the attention: decree 6655, article 24 of August 18, 1924, institutes that the compulsory school attendance does not extend to poor children: “[...] exempt from the obligation of school attendance are the *minors* unable to attend school for absolute lack of means of communication or for notorious destitution” (Minas Gerais, art. 24, emphasis added). But *to facilitate the attendance of destitute minors*, article 470 reaffirms the need of the *Caixa Escolar* for the distribution of *prizes, school meal, clothes, footwear, personal objects, medicines*. This procedure should be controlled by the teachers, in accordance with article 473, “[...] for assistance, the teachers will organize the lists of destitute students of their classes who need to be helped”. As in the imperial context, also in the Republic, lists of *destitute students* also were integrated to the writing operation of the school in the production of childhood.

It stands out the diversity of the lexicon to refer to poor children in the school: poor students, disfavored childhood, minors and destitute students, being that the use of word *minor* in the school documents will

be more frequent in the 1920s. As already commented, since the penal code of 1890 the word minor did not mean under aged and started to assign transgressor children, being reaffirmed in the Code of Minors of October 12, 1927 (Brasil, 1927). In this context, it is highlighted the indiscriminate way with which the word was used to define the inferiority of a group: abandoned children, poor orphans, transgressors, workers, as well as poor children in the school.

During the First Congress of Primary Teaching of the State of Minas Gerais in May of 1927, as a preparation for the Francisco Campos reform, the *Caixa Escolar* was reaffirmed as an *auxiliary institution* in all public school, organized by distinguished people of the locality and with compulsory contributions (Minas Gerais, 1927). During the event, it was disseminated by means of photographs some initiatives of the principals of *Grupos Escolares*, among them the one from Areado, where there was the “Inauguration of daily school meals, kept by the *Caixa Escolar* Antonio Hygino, annexed to the group of the same name, and of which poor students benefit” (Minas Gerais, 1927, p. 500).

Final Remarks

The little party, the allegory is over - one symbolizing the *Caixa Escolar*, having in one hand an electric light bulb and in the other a book, who seemed to deliver to a child, *in her knees*, symbolizing the disfavored childhood²⁵ (Account from the school inspector Raimundo Nunes de Oliveira, 1914, emphasis added).

This excerpt is from the account made by the school inspector Raimundo Nunes de Oliveira on the occasion of the inauguration of the *Caixa Escolar* in Divino in December 14, 1914. In the dialogue with Norbert Elias, it is possible to detect some clues for the understanding of the elaboration, in industrial societies, of the condition of being poor as an outsider position, in view of the interdependence between rich and poor people, but mainly the grading of this interdependence, and in general the existence of much dependence of the poor people, and at the same time the process of election of the economic advantage as social distinction.

Specifically, in the case of poor children, the expansion of the compulsory public school, in a precarious and unequal way, contributed decisively for its reference as outsider. Back to the inspector’s account, we ask, following the explanatory model of Elias, which power relations allowed the representation of the child to be benefited by the *Caixa Escolar* as a person without validity and to be validated through the book, through the knowledge?

Since the 19th century, with the consolidation of the market economy, the production of validity of poor children through work and through school was presented in a conflicting way. Initiatives like the regulation of children’s work and the compulsory schooling were not enough to modify their position of outsider. The question is that making

the school education a space of experience of childhood caused a dilemma next to the poor layers of the population. Although this fact was already totally perceivable in the 19th century, in the process of organization of the Brazilian Republican government, there was a significant shift in the function of the school as a place of formation of the voter and the citizen.

But, if on one hand the school was presented as right of the citizens, on the other little was changed in the conditions of the poor children to attend the school, indicating deeply unequal power relations and the experience of tensions of class in the school. Although there are not yet studies related to the efficacy of the *Caixas Escolares* to improve the attendance of poor children to school, there is evidence that its existence favored the elaboration of stigmatization of the poor children as inferior.

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Notes

- 1 The model was developed based on the research developed along with John L. Scotson in the end of the 1950s in the community of Winston Parva (a fictitious name given to the locality), England, being the book published for the first time in 1965.
- 2 The searched documents belong to the archives of the Minas Gerais Public Archive (APM).
- 3 Code of Portuguese law, sanctioned by Felipe I in 1595, and printed in the reign of Felipe II, 1603.
- 4 Since we are discussing conditions of childhood, the localization of the poor student will only be possible from the representations elaborated by adults, that is, by the public power, by the teachers and, sometimes, by parents or guardians.
- 5 Seção Provincial (1831a).
- 6 Seção Provincial (1832a).
- 7 Seção Provincial (1832b).
- 8 Seção Provincial (1831b).
- 9 Seção Provincial (1844b).
- 10 Reports from President of Province (1859).
- 11 Seção Provincial (1872).
- 12 Seção Provincial (1873).
- 13 Reports from President of Province (1883).
- 14 Reports from President of Province (1885).
- 15 Seção Provincial (1839).
- 16 Seção Provincial (1844a).

- 17 Seção Provincial (1836).
18 Reports from President of Province (1868).
19 Secretaria do Interior (1909).
20 This issue, we know, is classic; it was object of analysis of different authors, being that in the 19th century Karl Marx (1975) and Friedrich Engels (1985) may be considered as those who better unraveled the social consequences of the unequal distribution of wealth, or yet the unequal distribution of the means of satisfaction of the material needs of the human beings.
21 Minas Gerais (1907).
22 Secretaria do Interior (1908).
23 Secretaria do Interior (1913).
24 Secretaria do Interior (1914).
25 Secretaria do Interior (1914).

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