

# ARTICLE

## MILITARIZATION OF EDUCATION AND PUBLIC OPINION: SOCIOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON STATEMENTS FROM THE NEWSPAPER *O POPULAR*<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** This documentary and bibliographic study selected and categorized all the texts published between 2015 and 2018 in the Goiás newspaper *O Popular* on the subject of “military schools.” It then selected all the statements about the Goiás population's support for militarizing state schools. Based on theoretical keys presented by Bourdieu (2008; 1984), this essay describes and analyses the positions that emerge about the militarization of state schools in Goiás. To do this, he uses Bakhtin's (1997) concept of utterances as an element that makes up public opinion discourse, whose characteristics touch on common sense about education and the militarization policy. It then seeks to understand how these positions are engendered and articulated as the foundations of a supposed “public opinion”. Thus, in addition to the “sociological gaze” prescribed by Bourdieu, to discuss the dynamics of the school environment, Carvalho (2013) and Aquino (2014) are used. The text presents possibilities for understanding the socio-cultural bases that drive the positions expressed by “public opinion”. In addition, the study makes it possible to describe the social place in which the discourses that defend the militarization of education in Goiás operate.

**Keywords:** Newspaper. Militarized education. Public opinion. Sociology. Culture.

## MILITARIZAÇÃO DA EDUCAÇÃO E OPINIÃO PÚBLICA: REFLEXÕES SOCIOLÓGICAS EM ENUNCIADOS DO JORNAL *O POPULAR*

**RESUMO:** Esta pesquisa, de caráter documental e bibliográfico, selecionou e categorizou todos os textos publicados entre 2015 e 2018, no periódico goiano *O Popular* sobre a temática “escola militar”. Em seguida, selecionou todos os enunciados que versam sobre a chancela da população goiana à militarização de escolas públicas da rede estadual. A partir de chaves teóricas apresentadas por Bourdieu (2008; 1984), este artigo descreve e analisa os posicionamentos que ali emergem acerca do processo de militarização

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das escolas da rede pública estadual de Goiás. Para isso, utiliza o conceito de enunciados, em Bakhtin (1997), como elemento que compõe o discurso da opinião pública, cujas características tangem o senso comum sobre a educação e a política de militarização. Em seguida, busca compreender como tais posicionamentos são engendrados e articulados enquanto alicerces de uma suposta “opinião pública”. Assim, além do “olhar sociológico” prescrito por Bourdieu, o estudo lança mão de Carvalho (2013) e Aquino (2014) para discorrer sobre dinâmicas próprias do ambiente escolar. O texto apresenta possibilidades de compreensão das bases socioculturais que dinamizam os posicionamentos que a “opinião pública” manifesta. Ademais, o estudo possibilita descrever o lugar social em que se operam os discursos que defendem a militarização da educação em Goiás.

**Palavras-chave:** Jornal. Educação militarizada. Opinião pública. Sociologia. Cultura.

## **MILITARIZACIÓN DE LA EDUCACIÓN Y OPINIÓN PÚBLICA: REFLEXIONES SOCIOLÓGICAS SOBRE ENUNCIADOS DEL PERIÓDICO *O POPULAR***

**RESUMEN:** El estudio documental y bibliográfico seleccionó y categorizó todos los textos publicados entre 2015 y 2018 en el periódico *O Popular* de Goiás sobre el tema de las "escuelas militares". A continuación, se seleccionaron todos los enunciados sobre el apoyo de la población de Goiás a la militarización de las escuelas públicas. Utilizando las claves teóricas presentadas por Bourdieu (2008; 1984), este artículo describe y analiza las posiciones que emergen sobre el proceso de militarización de las escuelas estatales en Goiás. Para él, utiliza el concepto de enunciado de Bakhtin (1997) como elemento constitutivo del discurso de la opinión pública, cuyas características tocan el sentido común sobre la educación y la política de militarización. A continuación, trata de comprender cómo se engendran y articulan esas posiciones como fundamentos de una supuesta "opinión pública". Así, además de la "mirada sociológica" prescrita por Bourdieu, el estudio utiliza Carvalho (2013) y Aquino (2014) para discutir la dinámica del ambiente escolar. El texto presenta posibilidades de comprensión de las bases socioculturales que dinamizan las posiciones expresadas por la "opinión pública". Además, el estudio permite describir el lugar social en el que operan los discursos que defienden la militarización de la educación en Goiás.

**Palabras clave:** Periódico. Educación militarizada. Opinión pública. Sociología. Cultura.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Between 1999 and 2019, 60 schools within Goiás's state network and at least seven municipal schools (Santos, 2020) were militarized, i.e., those whose management was transferred to some military corporation, such as the military police (MP) (Santos; Alves, 2022; Mendonça, 2019; Santos, 2016). Observing this phenomenon, we have noticed an increase in texts expressing various opinions from the population of Goiás, both in support of and against militarization. We believe that such support is now being used as a rationale by the state and municipal governments to promote this policy further. In our recent bibliographic reviews on the topic, we found no academic studies that systematically investigate how the population and school communities feel about this education model, whether positively or negatively. Additionally, we did not find studies that explore relationships of endorsement through statements that support the project and its expansion.

With this context, we draw on Bakhtin (1997) to understand the statement as a reflection of language in use across different “spheres of human activity”. From this perspective, the statement can reveal:

The specific conditions and purposes of each of these spheres, not only by its (thematic) content and verbal style, that is, by the selection operated by the resources of language – lexical, phrasal and grammatical resources – but also, and above all, by its compositional construction (Bakhtin, 1997, p. 280).

To investigate the relationship in question, we examined newspaper texts related to the militarization process. Our initial focus was on polls and surveys published in newspapers within the state of Goiás, which provided some evidence of popular support for militarization. We specifically analyzed statements from the Goiás newspaper *O Popular*, searching for the term “military school” on its website. We selected the timeframe from 2015 to 2018, which coincided with the expansion of militarized schools in the state (Santos; ALVES, 2022). Our initial search yielded 512 results. After refining the data by reviewing the titles and leads, we cataloged only those that contained the exact search terms.

## METHOD

We selected 50 texts from different genres and distributed them in different sections of the newspaper. Among these, 38 forums were published in both their printed and online versions, while 12 forums appeared only online. We found that out of the 50 texts we read regarding schools under the intervention of the Military Police of Goiás (PMGO), 27 contain direct or indirect quotes from people, organizations, or associations addressing the issue. Also, of the two dozen texts published online, only one had the opinion of a mayor from a municipality of Goiás.

Upon analyzing the selected material for the second time, we identified eight statements addressing the topic against the militarization process (Pinheiro, 2015a; 2015b; Lima, 2015a; 2015b; Lima, 2016; Rodrigues, 2017a; Pinheiro; Almeida, 2015). Between 2015 and 2017, these statements came from a variety of sources, including a basic education teacher, university professors involved in training future educators, family members of students, the president of the Union of Education Workers of Goiás (SINTEGO), and social movements opposing militarization, as reflected in articles published by the newspaper. Additionally, we found an editorial from the newspaper dated July 26, 2015, expressing the opinion that schools should not be militarized excessively. (*A polêmica [...]*, 2015)

We identified five significant instances of positive statements regarding militarization. One article reported on a petition initiated by merchants and residents near Colégio Lyceu de Goiânia, calling for its militarization due to the “lack of security in the region and incidents of theft and robbery” (Ferreira, 2017). Also, two texts highlighted the former superintendent of the High School of Goiás, who was then the future Secretary of Education of Goiás, expressing support for the project of a “military school in Goiás”, albeit with some reservations (Pereira, 2015; Redação, 2018). Lastly, a text with several testimonials from former students and their family members praised the “management model of the Military Police” (Almeida, 2018a). Overall, these texts use specific actors who are directly or indirectly linked to basic education, including teachers, unions, students and their families, and organized social movements.

We found four texts published between December 11, 2017, and November 23, 2018 that cited authorities linked to the PMGO Teaching Command. In these samples, the statements claimed that the project is a demand from “society” or “representatives of society”. While we recorded other statements from PMGO authorities during our data collection, we chose to disregard those that only discussed the role of PMGO in these schools or the operationality of implementing the project, as they did not reference other social actors, whether linked to education or not. Reinforcing the hypothesis of a movement of endorsement, we observed six texts published between December 11, 2017, and December 23, 2018, in which authorities associated with the government of Goiás asserted that the militarization of public schools reflects a demand from the population or their representatives.

We have selected an example that shows the movements that get the population's support for militarization: the government of Goiás, through its communications office, states that "it has become the main demand presented by *mayors, councilors and deputies* representing the rural area"; the PMGO education commander links militarization to "*society's demand*" (Rodrigues, 2017b, emphasis added). In the same text, the mayor of Hidrolândia (GO) and president of the Goiana Association of Municipalities (AGM-*Associação Goiana de Município*) asserts that militarization "[corresponds to] a *desire of society*". In 2018, the PM education commander emphatically attributes the militarization of schools to the "*interests of the cities*," referencing the "*requests made to the former governor's office*," and states that there is "*support from the population*" (Almeida, 2018b, our emphasis).

We also collected data that included 13 letters from readers published between March 07, 2016, and August 29, 2018. These letters express different statements on the topic of militarization. Seven letters are from readers who oppose militarization, and six support it. Only two letters indicate the profession of the respective reader, one is a university professor and the other is a priest. Box 1 shows the statements that indicate the content of these opinions in the "Letter from the Reader" section:

**Box 1:** Texts from the Letter to the Reader section between 2015 and 2018

Date	Title	Author	Selected excerpts
03/07/16	Military school	Inácio da Rocha	<i>We cannot remain blind and watch citizens dying in the streets, knowing that there are hundreds of professionals working for the Department of Education, which is not their responsibility. Pirenópolis – GO</i>
11/13/17	Military schools	João Bosco Costa Lima	<i>The State's connivance with this militarization of education reveals its incompetence in dealing with education. [...]. Those who think that militarization is the path to good education are mistaken. [...] among the 100 schools in Goiás with the highest averages in the 2015 Enem objective tests, only two are not private. Therefore, excellence is found in the private network. The Secretary of Education, Culture, and Sports of Goiás has the floor. João Bosco Costa Lima – Jardim Salvador – Trindade</i>
11/21/17	Education	João B. C. Lima	<i>The trend of militarizing schools in the state education system is a cause for concern. João Bosco Costa Lima – Jardim Salvador – Trindade</i>
07/29/18	Military schools	Maria de Lourdes Barbalho	<i>The new model stands out for imposing limits on a permissive youth, who were running out of rules! Let more military schools come! Maria de Lourdes Barbalho West Sector – Goiânia</i>
08/04/18	Military school: scam	Vânia Carmem Lima	<i>As a response to Maria de Lourdes' speech about military schools, in a letter published here on July 29, I speak from the position of an educator who, like Paulo Freire, conceives of education as an act capable of reflective and liberating empowerment. [...] To strip the school of its specificity, attributing to it a function typical of the police, is to attest to its failure as an educational institution. Vânia Carmem Lima – Master in Linguistics, assistant professor at the Federal University of Goiás (Jataí Regional).</i>
08/06/18	Military schools	Maria de Lourdes Barbalho	<i>In contrast to Vânia Carmem Lima's letter [...] I come to reaffirm the values of these schools, where the student, in addition to learning the content, also learns respect for teachers, society, and the country. Maria de Lourdes Barbalho – West Sector – Goiânia.</i>
08/06/18	No title	Pe. Carlos F. da Silva	<i>I completely agree with the teacher [Vânia Carmem Lima] about this deception and the mistake that is the military school. Father Carlos Ferreira da Silva. – Vila Monticelli – Goiânia.</i>
08/07/18	Military schools	Luiz Carlos Machado	<i>With reference to the letter from a professor at UFG in Jataí, in which she criticizes military schools, I make the following comments: the statements that attribute police functions to military schools are not supported by any reference; the statement that they teach the reproduction of repression also seems gratuitous; what is highlighted by the [sic] school directors is that they emphasize moral values, discipline and patriotism. Luiz Carlos Machado – Coimbra Sector – Goiânia.</i>
08/08/18	Wrongful discrimination	João Afonso Berquó Filho	<i>A democratic "battle" of opinions has been established here regarding the military school [...] The university professor is mistaken in her emphatic assertion [...]. A survey among parents shows that a significant percentage of the responses are in favor of the military institution, showing great difficulty in obtaining a place in these schools. João Afonso Berquó Filho – Jardim Planalto – Goiânia.</i>

Date	Title	Author	Selected excerpts
08/09/18	The real function of school	Vânia Carmem Lima	<i>Some people's lack of information or training makes them incapable of recognizing school as the quintessential literacy agency. To do so, the individual must go beyond common sense and be able to move autonomously in a literate society, capable of reading between the lines. It is regrettable to see people with such shallow thinking that they do not conceive of education as the development of the individual's capacity to acquire new knowledge: languages, argumentation, and wisdom. After reading the text by Luiz Carlos Machado, published here, we are convinced that we urgently need to recover the meaning of school as an institution capable of building the subject of knowledge, who knows how to discuss with propriety and foundation, not frivolously and without any theoretical or practical basis, as Luiz Carlos did, giving clear proof of ignorance on the subject.</i>
08/11/18	Military school	Luiz C. Machado	<i>Regarding the controversy surrounding the topic of "Military schools," portrayed in this column, and in response to a letter from a professor published in the August 9 edition that mentions me by name, using terms such as "a person with such shallow thinking" and "without any theoretical or practical basis," I would like to point out that I have a degree in Industrial and Metallurgical Engineering from the Fluminense Federal University. I worked for 27 years in large-scale industries in São Paulo. [...] I would like to inform you that I will not comment on the subject again, but we must remain vigilant, as we are in a season of deconstruction. Just watch the debates between the political candidates for the upcoming elections.</i>
08/19/18	Military school	Leonardo Marques Siqueira	<i>In the last few days, I have been following the debate of some readers about the military education system in Goiás. [...] In my opinion, there is no reason for the outcry over the implementation of military schools, since they did not come to take the place of civilian training schools. The two education models are not mutually exclusive. They complement each other. Furthermore [...] what really matters is that students learn mathematics, Portuguese, social sciences, etc. [...] The rest is academic discussion. Leonardo Marques Siqueira – Centro – Quirinópolis (GO).</i>
08/29/18	Instead of books, the gun	Filadelfo B. de Lima	<i>I do not use the adjective crazy because, by doing so, I would be being unfair to the crazy people who have martyred themselves and continue to martyr in favor of the most sublime ideals. Great deeds have always been generated in madness. I do not know the appropriate classification for the presidential candidate who adopts the revolver as a symbol of his electoral campaign, with the aggravating factor of picking up children in his arms to encourage them to use it. Instead of books, culture, art, health, daycare, a plentiful table, and life opportunities, the revolver. His educational "plan" indicates the militarization of public schools in which one will not be able to think, analyze, or criticize. It will be the return of the cane, censorship, and memorization.</i>

**Source:** Table prepared by the authors based on the archives of the newspaper *O Popular*.

At the time this article was submitted for publication, we had not identified surveys that quantify the population's support for the militarization project. Authorities interviewed and cited by the newspaper did not provide any objective data or source to prove, analyze, or quantify the alleged support from "society". However, we believe it is evident that opinions against militarization are predominant in the current context and are expressed by specific actors, particularly those connected to education, either directly or indirectly. The statements made by PMGO authorities, as reported in this analysis, contradict this perception and maintain the argument of widespread social support, suggesting that they represent "public opinion" on the topic.

To understand how these positions are generated and articulated as precursors of such a response to the process of militarization, we observed Bourdieu (2008; 1984), Carvalho (2013), and Aquino (2014) to discuss the dynamics of the school environment. In the following sections, we explore the sociocultural foundations that inform the positions expressed by "public opinion". Furthermore, we examine the social context in which statements advocating for the militarization of education in Goiás are made.

To this end, in addition to this introductory section that outlines the theoretical and methodological foundations of the research, we present the section titled "In what ways does the militarization of public education in Goiás articulate social support?" This section explains the reading of the "sociological eye" of Bourdieu (1984, p. 94), which is utilized in the research to analyze various statements. Then, the section "Dissatisfaction with the school model practiced by schools in the state



network of Goiás: on the incompatibility between expectations and possibilities” contextualizes the criticisms of public schools. This context helps us understand the support for the militarization of schools that as reflected in the selected journalistic material. Finally, in the section “On the problem of ‘school indiscipline’”, we discuss how the concept of school indiscipline, through the theoretical concepts formulated by Aquino (2014), is misused to justify the militarization of schools. In conclusion, we organized two analysis sections, “‘Public opinion’ as an instrument to endorse the militarization of education in Goiás” and “The place where public opinion is formulated about the militarization of education in Goiás”. Here, we discuss the results that demonstrate how political actors advocating for militarization seek to legitimize it by appealing to a so-called popular appeal. The “Final considerations” section will present our inferences and reflections based on the articulation of the results.

## **IN WHAT WAYS DOES THE MILITARIZATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN GOIÁS ARTICULATE SOCIAL SUPPORT?**

Although the analysis does not provide quantitative evidence that the majority of the population of Goiás supports this educational policy, it cannot be said that this population and the school communities reject the militarization of public schools. The support for this type of project is quite consistent with the current political, social, and economic situation in Brazil and Goiás, marked by a rise in conservatism and a regression of acquired social rights, as evidenced in Filadelfo's statement on August 29, 2019. Therefore, it is worth analyzing how these statements operate and interact with concrete reality.

We found that the statements made by PMGO authorities about the population's support for this type of school establish relationships of endorsement. The statements contained in the PMGO texts articulate a supposed hegemonic and favorable public opinion as the basis for the militarization of schools. However, it is possible to identify that the statements in the excerpt from the newspaper's texts indicate a strong rejection of the militarized education project by some school communities. On the other hand, we emphasize that the expansion of the militarization of public schools in Goiás could not occur, obviously, without the political, social and cultural conditions that allowed it. This process is part of the power struggle that regulates the functioning of societies, and the statements expressed in the material analyzed about the support for militarization are constitutive parts of this power struggle.

To understand this situation, it is necessary to problematize it, seeking, through what Bourdieu (1984) calls a “sociological eye” (p. 694), to map and analyze what is behind such an opinion. If a survey were conducted to analyze public opinion about the militarization of education, it could not, for example, be limited to simplistic, generic, and limiting questions such as “Are you in favor of the creation of military schools?”. The answers to such questions would be supported not only by the approval of a militarized model of education, but also by the denial of the current state public school model or by dissatisfaction with the functioning of public schools known to the supposed interviewee. The circulation of these statements, which we understand as opinions on the subject, involves their systematization in local newspapers and their dissemination by subjects and institutions that defend such a process. Furthermore, they are based precisely on this flawed *modus operandi* of social analysis, which often manages to capture only superficial representations of the subject. To understand in an undistorted and superficial way the alleged support for the militarization of education in Goiás, it is necessary to consider that:

The real foundations of discontent and dissatisfaction that are expressed, in deviant forms, can only reach consciousness, that is, explicit discourse, at the price of work that aims to reveal the things buried in the people who live them and who at the same time do not know them and, in another sense, know them better than anyone else (Bourdieu, 2008, p. 708).

We consider it necessary to make some digressions and analyses to better address how dissatisfaction with the school model practiced by schools in the state network of Goiás is related to sociocultural mechanisms that create the political conditions for endorsing the militarization of public education in the state.

To answer the initial question of this section, we will relate dissatisfaction with the school model previously in force and the proposal for a new model, and we will point out how this dissatisfaction

was captured opportunistically by those who are carrying out the militarization. To this end, we will address two crucial aspects that are leading the propaganda for school militarization: (1) the issue of better structural conditions and human resources offered by the Goiás State Military Police Schools (CEPMG), reverberating throughout the school organization as a whole; and (2) the issue of the infamous school indiscipline.

## **DISSATISFACTION WITH THE SCHOOL MODEL PRACTICED BY SCHOOLS IN THE STATE NETWORK OF GOIÁS: ON THE INCOMPATIBILITY BETWEEN EXPECTATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES**

Since 1970, the Brazilian government has been implementing public policies aimed at expanding access to basic education (that is, by universalizing access to elementary education, which previously had been subject to highly exclusive selection processes). This expansion began at the height of the military regime, and should not be considered a symptom of a democratization policy. It corresponds to an expression of adaptation to the demands of local and international productive forces that, given the capitalist economic development scenario of the time, demanded the provision of more massive and prolonged socialization. Furthermore, the policy of universalizing access is consistent with the image of modernization that the regime tried to convey to the Brazilian population and to international organizations directly or indirectly linked to education, such as the United Nations. Since then, public schools have experienced an increasing massification of their public, which abruptly changed the qualitative relationship between teachers and students within public educational institutions. Teachers, previously accustomed to receiving a more elite audience, selected through exclusionary selection processes, began to receive students from the most popular classes in Brazilian society. The school, however, did not undergo significant structural reforms, nor did the teaching staff receive specific training in line with the new reality (Carvalho, 2013). Consequently, signs increasingly appeared within schools that indicated an incongruity between the traditional bureaucratic-administrative functioning of schools, the school culture, and the demands and specific needs of subjectivation of this new audience (Aquino, 2014).

Concomitant with the massification of basic education, in recent decades, society has begun to develop and disseminate numerous ideas that place educational processes as central to the “construction of a better future”, “for the development of the nation” and as a bridge to the individual’s social ascension (Aquino, 2014). It is possible to infer the popularization of the idea that education should be a priority in our society. Above all, the framework of transformations described above produces numerous pressures, expectations, and demands on schools. According to Aquino (2014, p. 115):

The contemporary world has certainly witnessed a progressive widening of the scope of school action, embodied in the multiplication of the list of tasks of its professionals. Driven by the consensual refrain that it would be a matter of preparing students, ever more and better (whether for the active exercise of citizenship, or the mastery of specific skills and competencies, or even for some type of qualification, be it preparatory or professional) for entry into a world of great complexity, the missions attributed to schooling do not hide an ultra-reformist ambition of society, expressed in a multidimensionality of reparatory or salvationist functions of some uses and customs of the population segments under its care – which would encompass indistinctly clientele and school agents.

Since public schools do not seem to meet the demands of contemporary times, discourses on the crisis in education seek causes or those to blame for what they call school failure. Frustrations in the face of auspicious expectations surrounding schools provoke diverse reactions in the school community (students, teaching staff, administrative staff, and families): apathy, political inertia, and, equally, conscious or unconscious movements, systematic or not, that dispute divergent, convergent, or antagonistic school projects. Faced with this scenario of dissatisfaction, Aquino (2014) warns that the “recurrent claim of a ‘crisis’ in formal education” is also the result of the “exuberance of its declared purposes and the instability of its empirical achievement” (p. 116).

On the one hand, various political, ideological, and epistemological conceptions agree that schools should prepare students for public life, that this institution, in general terms, should be a privileged place for critical ethical-political education, and that it should develop in students otherness, respect for the collective, and a democratic spirit. However, they also recognize that carrying out this educational project is a difficult challenge in contemporary times, since it is a challenge to “educate for a common ethical education in a ‘society of individuals’” (Carvalho, 2013, p. 44). On the other hand, we perceive, in political rhetoric and advertising campaigns (especially in private education networks), a superficial discourse that demands a more utilitarian school, one that is “more practical and less theoretical” and that prepares students for selection processes and the job market. This dichotomous analysis aims to present, in general terms, the poles of contradiction in which ideas about the role of schools could be grouped. This analysis allows us to reflect on the discourses that could support the militarization of public schools in Goiás. A more detailed analysis would not simplify the disputes over the conception of education into two poles. It is also worth noting that the concepts of “critical ethical-political education”, “otherness”, “respect for the collective”, and “democratic spirit” are understood differently depending on the philosophical schools in which they are used. Despite the difference between the poles described above, in general terms, the two trends converge in affirming that schools have failed to achieve their objectives, although pragmatic views of education are more inclined to this discourse.

Having presented this general, historical picture, which outlines the atmosphere of dissatisfaction with the regular public school model by the school community, which is due to the gap between the role that public schools can play and the expectations that society has of them; it is also worth pointing out that in Goiás, in recent years, we have noticed a sharp decline in the functioning (in a more concrete and ordinary sense) of public schools in the state network.

To analyze this work, we noticed that there was a notable strangulation in the funding of schools in the state network in the years in which the research was conducted. This had the following direct consequences: lack of minimum physical infrastructure to perform their functions; insufficient number of teachers or professors working in areas of knowledge other than those of their academic training. In other words, factors that contribute to apathy and disinterest among students in school, which fuel dissatisfaction among the entire school community.

Given the above, the emergence of a different school model, combined with the self-proclamation of its practical results – to the detriment of critical education – obviously has considerable seductive potential. Furthermore, while regular schools suffer from the progressive withdrawal of funding, militarized schools begin to receive significant funds (Alves, Toschi, Ferreira, 2018). These data are enough to infer that, precisely contrary to what the Government of Goiás, its Department of Education, and the PMGO said at the time in the media analyzed, militarization is a political project conceived, operated, and encouraged by the government. It is important to emphasize that, despite all the statements by the authorities of the Goiás executive branch that we have listed claiming that militarization is a demand of the population, the then governor Marconi Perillo from the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB), whose administrations were responsible for conducting the most acute process of militarization of schools in Goiás, admitted that he militarizes schools to promote political persecution, at a business event: “I went to an event and there was a group of radical teachers from the extreme left insulting me. I said: I have a little remedy for you. Military school and Social Organization. I identified the eight schools of these teachers. I prepared a bill and then militarized these eight schools. Brazil needs ‘*Nego*’ that dares to face” (PULCINELI, 2015). Speech was widely publicized by the written press at the time. Thus, as we demonstrated, militarization does not correspond to a mere service of a demand from the population, which would include the PMGO model in a natural, spontaneous, and widespread way.

## ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF “SCHOOL DISCIPLINE”

The problem surrounding the so-called school indiscipline also deserves detailed attention to address dissatisfaction with the school model practiced by schools in the state network of Goiás, especially when militarized schools promise to solve it. Aquino (2014) warns that discourses dealing with



this dispute often create inaccurate representations of reality, which obscure or exaggerate the phenomenon and can convert the aforementioned violence

[...] in a kind of generalized social belief – belief because its performative force consists in amalgamating multiple and potentially different meanings of the same experience for all of us involved. A nuanced experience and, at the same time, turned into a dominant, exclusive image (Aquino, 2014, p. 92).

However, it is undeniable that the statements about indiscipline highlight the problem of the aggravating strangulation in the functioning of public schools in the state of Goiás. Thus, in this work, we analyze the issue of discipline under two interconnected facets: 1) the concrete manifestations of death throes that hinder or impede the functioning of pedagogical activities (without losing sight of the totality of the phenomenon involving state schools in Goiás); and 2) the over-dimensioning of disciplinary issues that leads to the taking of mistaken pedagogical decisions. These facets, although distinct, constitute a unit that participates in the dynamization of school processes.

Also in this context, the proposal for military discipline is based on the argument that one of the reasons for the alleged lack of discipline in conventional schools would be an excess of permissiveness in pedagogical practices and school management, often understood superficially as an “excess of democracy”, evidenced in terms such as “permissive youth” in the letter to the reader on July 29, 2018. However, it is not possible to affirm that public schools in Goiás have experienced, at any point in their history, truly democratic regimes or that the legal provisions that prescribe the implementation of democratic management were applied appropriately. According to Carvalho (2013):

[...] identifying the “democratization of education” with the mere implementation of pedagogical methods and rites of choice such as assemblies and elections, supposedly capable of cultivating the freedom of the student, has resulted in the impoverishment of both discussions about the concept of democracy and those that examine its link with educational practices. Whatever the educational value of these practices, within the school, they will never be more than a simulacrum of democracy [...] in which the internal freedom of individual will is confused with freedom as a political phenomenon and the crucial issue of democratizing access to a public cultural heritage is obscured by the ideal of supposedly “democratic” interpersonal relationships because they are allegedly “egalitarian” (Carvalho, 2013, p. 63).

Therefore, we have found that public opinion, as previously identified, is used to fuel the defense of the militarization of Goiás education, attributing the failure to the mechanical, or even bogus, application of supposedly democratic pedagogical precepts and practices. To oppose an inoperative system, public opinion seems to be inclined to approve blatantly authoritarian measures, typical of the military *modus operandi* – identified, for example, in the excerpts from the letters to the reader, dated 08/19/18, “the rest is academic discussion” and 08/07/2018, in which the author extols “moral values, discipline and patriotism”. Let us note that the proposal for military discipline emerges in this scenario in a very timely and, above all, opportunistic way, which is consistent with the statements presented in Table 1.

Regarding support for policies that undermine the interests of those who, precisely, support them, Bourdieu (2008, p. 735) asserts that sociological analyses must:

[...] obviously we must go back to the true economic and social determinants of the countless attacks on people's freedom, on their legitimate aspiration to happiness and self-realization, which today are exercised not only by the merciless laws of the labor or housing market, but also by the verdicts of the school market, or by the open sanctions or insidious attacks of professional life. To do this, we must go beyond the screen of often absurd, sometimes hateful projections, behind which discomfort or suffering are hidden as much as they are expressed.

## **“PUBLIC OPINION” AS AN INSTRUMENT TO ENDORSE THE MILITARIZATION OF EDUCATION IN GOIÁS**

We finally realized that the dissatisfaction of the school community with the regular school model of the Goiás state education network can be divided into two areas. The first is pragmatic: militarized schools have better infrastructure, more human resources, and physical spaces that meet the needs of the school (Ferreira, 2018; Alves; Toschi; Ferreira, 2018). The second area, while focusing on moral issues, is also linked to pragmatic concerns. We believe that discipline directly impacts students' academic performance. These issues arise from a desire for social advancement through academic success, which explains why pragmatic needs often overshadow the importance of reflective and philosophical education. In this context, the words of the deputy director of the Military Police's teaching command, Lieutenant Colonel Rosângela Pereira de Moraes, provided insight during an interview with *Jornal Opção* on July 25, 2015. When asked about how the CPMG works on the critical education for its students, she responded:

The critical issue is addressed in a very transparent manner. The *historical context is taught objectively and transparently, not in a philosophical way*. We cannot philosophically address the historical context, because that would mean teaching our ideology. That is something we do not agree with. The student is the one who needs to draw his conclusions. Our students are very critical and have held important positions in society. For example, we had a student who defended one of his projects in the Senate in 2012. He was invited to be there. This shows that our students are encouraged to think, discuss, and express their opinions. They are not alienated students. Quite the opposite, they are students who are encouraged to participate in debates to prepare for the world. They are caught off guard, for example, in class to bring up an issue and discuss it. These are students who are required to read one book per month; books that universities require in their entrance exams. If students cannot afford to buy them, the library buys and lends them these books. People who read so much cannot be alienated (Gouveia, 2015 – our emphasis).

After mapping and analyzing possible reasons that support public opinion in favor of militarizing education in Goiás, it is necessary to examine how this opinion is formed. This analysis shows that the public opinion surrounding public education in Goiás superficially reflects the desires of society, especially within school communities. Above all, it tends to hide the political mechanisms that contribute to the real issues in education. Ultimately, this process highlights only the supportive aspects of militarization, effectively mobilizing social forces to advocate for the involvement of military police professionals—who lack appropriate training for educational settings and whose institutional role is not geared towards education—in basic education.

For Bourdieu (2008):

Social agents do not have infused knowledge of what they are and what they do; more precisely, they do not necessarily have access to the principle of their discontent or their discomfort and the most spontaneous statements can, without any intention of dissimulation, express something quite different from what they apparently say (Bourdieu, 2008, p. 707-708).

In this text, Bourdieu also criticizes the inadequate methodologies in the social sciences. By exploring this topic further, we can question the democratic legitimacy of relying on public opinion – as the statements superficially express representations of societal dynamics – as an excuse for the intense militarization of education in Goiás. Many social actors cited in social media discussions to support this militarization may not fully understand the principles behind their positions.

## **THE PLACE FOR FORMULATING PUBLIC OPINION ON THE MILITARIZATION OF EDUCATION IN GOIÁS**

We observed that the statements about the population's support for the project to militarize public schools in Goiás, as expressed in the texts selected for this research, link their dissatisfaction with the current situation of public schools in the state to their true desires. The defense of the militarization of public education in Goiás relies on the appeals, demands, and beliefs of the school community, particularly the parents and relatives of students. However, these ideas that tend to support the

militarization of education cannot be understood as a defense originating from the school community, nor as a reflection on their politically and socially situated demands, as we have demonstrated above.

We examine how the official websites of the PMGO and CEPMG present their statements regarding the expansion and consolidation of school units under their authority. The expansion of the CEPMG network is portrayed as a response to demand from the civilian population, which recognizes the effective management and policy formulation carried out by the PMGO in the education sector. However, throughout a review of the history of the expansion of the CEPMG, the PMGO has consistently worked to establish a strong presence in education actively promoting a positive image of its schools.

Regarding this logic of external demand or request from Goiás society, according to the PMGO:

In 2000, due to meet demand, the administration and part of the student and teaching staff moved to the facilities of Colégio Hugo de Carvalho Ramos, which was ceded by the State Government for the implementation of a new unit under military administration. The Department of Education handed over the management of Colégio Estadual “Hugo de Carvalho Ramos” to the PMGO, with more than 1,700 students enrolled. Military school, with its new structure, made more than 455 places available to the community (Portal [...], [20--?]).

The statement emphasizes that the PMGO met several demands and highlights that the “Secretary of Education *handed over* the management of the school to the PMGO” (our emphasis). This indicates approval of a teaching model and signifies the acceptance of a “mission” given to the PMGO. However, it is important to note that the statement attempts to downplay any violence associated with the militarization of the school. The School Hugo de Carvalho Ramos gained a “new structure” and the PMGO “made more than 455 vacancies available to the community”.

These excerpts from PMGO statements place the institution’s perspective within the framework described by Bourdieu:

[...] every exercise of force is accompanied by a discourse that aims to legitimize the force of the person exercising it; one could even say that it concerns every relationship of force, only having all its force to the extent that it is disguised as such (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 224, our translation)<sup>2</sup>.

In other words, although the PMGO seeks to express neutrality in analyzed excerpts, it actively promotes discourses that support militarization while concealing its dominant position in this process. In the official CEPMG website, particularly in its History section, there is a concern to address counter-hegemonic perspectives, likely to manage its growth. Some illustrative examples include statements regarding its network of Military schools. They state: “The new teaching units, when previously existing schools are transferred, absorb all students and staff [...]” (an attempt to respond to criticisms related to school exclusion in militarized schools can be perceived); “[...] the State Military Police Schools have been implementing significant transformations in the educational field, distinguishing as some of the most progressive and democratic schools in the State of Goiás, both for the quality of teaching and the participatory management of the school community” (reaffirming the discourse of quality and responding to criticisms that place the school in the conservative and anti-democratic camp).

We conclude that the context described in the previous sections forms a cultural framework that supports an educational political project. However, this project is not necessarily championed by the social classes and groups that currently appear to defend it. Instead, it operates through subtle and underlying sociocultural mechanisms that influence social relations.

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<sup>2</sup> In the original: “[...] tout exercice de la force s’accompagne d’un discours visant à légitimer la force de celui qui l’exerce; on peut même dire que le propre de tout rapport de force, c’est de n’avoir toute sa force que dans la mesure où il se dissimule como tel” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 224).

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the preceding pages, we have aimed to describe and analyze in detail some sociocultural mechanisms operating in so-called “public opinion” about the militarization of state network public schools. This analysis is based on a pre-selected corpus of statements.

We verify that there is a political education project driven by dominant sectors of society in Goiás, as manifested in sources analyzed by CEPMG representatives. This project is promoted through a strategy that seeks to gain public support for militarization. However, based on Bourdieu's theoretical contributions, an examination of how these mechanisms and the sociocultural elements that support them operate demonstrates the project's inherent fragility, perceived by the school community, which is trying to defend the actions of PMGO.

It was not possible to explore the historical aspects that would situate the analyzed “public opinion” in Goiás within a seemingly conservative political spectrum. However, we focused on examining the sociocultural factors related to these positions. Certainly, studies employing different methodologies and approaches that also consider other aspects of the relationship between public opinion and the militarization of schools in Goiás could yield more specific conclusions.

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Author 1 – Author of the research project, initial data collection and analysis, writing of the text and final review.

Author 2 – Review of the collected data, data analysis, writing of the text and final review.

Author 3 – Review of the collected data, data analysis, writing of the text and final review.

## DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with this article.