

**WHEN FINANCIAL BENEFITS GUARANTEE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE  
WITHOUT CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS STOPPING WORK:  
THE *BOLSA ESCOLA* CASE OF THE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT OF BELO HORIZONTE  
(BRAZIL)**

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**Introduction**

This article presents a self-evaluation of a policy of welfare benefits that is linked to the policy of guaranteed access to education. The subject is the School Welfare Program *Programa Bolsa Escola* (PEBE) implemented in 1997 by the Municipal Secretary of Education as a global maneuver to integrate the educational, political, and social environments with that of the family. PEBE's objective is to guarantee admission and continued presence in public schools of children and adolescents from 6 to 15 years of age, whose families contend with great material poverty or whose children have been observed in situations of risk. (BELO HORIZONTE, 1996)

At the moment, the program involves 11,334 families, with 20,362 children and adolescents, distributed throughout the nine municipal administrative regions. Approximately 57,248 people benefit directly or indirectly from the program. Conducting the program is done by registration of the participating family by the municipal executive power, with the dependents represented preferentially by the mother, or when impossible, by the father or legal guardian. The benefits are directed to the family, not being linked specifically to the child or teen, however, the requirement of presence in school is made for all dependents of school age, which is the focus of PEBE.

The criteria for registration in the program are: proof of enrollment in a public institution under municipal jurisdiction by all dependents between 6 and 15 years of age; income of no more than R\$ 84 (\$ 28 U.S.) per capita; and residency in Belo Horizonte for five years at the minimum. Continued participation in the program requires proof of class attendance equal to or greater than 85% (eighty-five percent), presence at requested meetings, participation in annual evaluation and keeping registration information updated (BELO HORIZONTE, 2001).

The monetary benefit could be temporarily suspended if the conditions for continuation in the program were not met. In the following cases permanent cancellation of the benefits occurred: when dependents reach 16 years of age or the family ends its residency in Belo Horizonte; in cases of fraudulent documents or false information provided; in the case of substantial improvement in the financial conditions that led to the family's initial enrollment in the program (BELO HORIZONTE, *op.cit.*).

The existence of criteria for eligibility and continuing to receive benefits is consistent with the foundations of social policy in Brazil. Faced with the impossibility of aiding the immense group of poor and unemployed, the state places conditions for receipt of welfare benefits; in the past dictating what should be eaten, as was the case with the Basic Food and Milk Ticket Programs. Currently, therefore, the state indicates what a family must do: keep their children in school and follow the pre-natal assistance plan, for example.

Although the European model did not achieve the success expected, it served as an example of a method to protect Brazilian society by developing

supplementary mechanisms rather than making minimal social rights universal (COSTA, 2003).

In the constitution of the Brazilian government, social protection excludes citizens with no formal employment, a clear example being the Social Security benefits guaranteed exclusively for those who have contributed to it. In the system's evolution, a parallel network, notably philanthropic, cares for those impoverished with no work contract, no health coverage, no school and nowhere to live.

Social policies have been changed in the context of productive restructuring as the result of the social, political and economic environment marked by the crises of the 1960s and 70s. Regarding the production sector, firms began restructuring not only due to the stimulus of competition, but also because of social conflicts, as a way of reacting to the social crisis and in order to increase productivity in an unstable market (ANTUNES, 2001).

The governmental machine and its contracts to provide social protection have undergone a metamorphosis, according to Castel (1998). To put it more clearly, the era of deregulation of work is the same as that of expansion and mutation in the social protective system. It is also the same era as structural unemployment that, paradoxically, runs parallel with the entrance of children and adolescents in the workforce, or in marginal activities that derive from social turbulence, e.g. criminality and drug trafficking.

The Federal Constitution of 1988 guarantees specific regulations for the problems resulting from the intense concentration of income (PNUD, 2004) and its expected effect on the quality of life of a population growing ever poorer.

It lays out a network regulating social protection: the Governmental Organ Health Law, the Governmental Organ Social Assistance Law, the Statute of Seniors, and what is of most interest in this research, the Statute of Children and Adolescent Minors.

The Regulations contained in the Constitutional Articles concerning social protection reorganize this sector. Social assistance, which had up until then been directed to society's most vulnerable areas, outside public social policies and handed over to philanthropist and consumer organizations, won its own statute with the Governmental Organ Social Assistance Law.

To return to PEBE, the efforts of those who govern to improve levels of education serve, at least, as an attempt to reduce social inequality, besides putting into practice a compensating policy via income distribution (Oliveira, 2003).

The question placed at the center of this investigation revolves around its first results, which prove that working by the population of dependents participating in PEBE combines with evidence of their attendance in school. That is to say, PEBE meets its objective of guaranteeing schooling without ending the employment of at least [2,197](#) (6%) minors earning income from work, as we shall see below.

The six-year experiment of PEBE implementing socio-familial tracking techniques and control of presence in school enabled us to contact, among others, a case of a fatal work accident involving a teen welfare recipient, besides innumerable reports by the population complaining about the state of children and teens working in the street and in other sordid environments. Confronting reality, the technical team dealt with the problem of poor families' practice, despite the

welfare benefit, of continuing to have their children work. Facing an employment market increasingly more restricted, it can be assumed that the minors were not exercising activities that added to their educational and personal growth. Cleaning homes and working in the streets were their main sources of income, as shown below.

Nobre (2003) when analyzing the causes of the current child labor structure, clarifies the duality of the phenomena that vacillates between the problem and the solution. The origin of the problem can be found in the concentration of wealth, precarious employment, high levels of unemployment and lack of a complete educational policy (2003:964). Nevertheless, working is seen as a solution to the failures of the educational system, as it permits the development of professional skills; also as a solution to poverty as it increases the family's income, and even as a solution to street violence, since working kids have no free time to become involved with drugs or to loiter on the streets. Child labor considered to be natural, in the terms used by Nobre (*op. cit.*), is a difficult concept to deconstruct. A goal of PEBE should be support of an inter-sector action that brings about changes in ideas and symbols currently present in the social representation of work.

It is known that work can serve as an impetus to self-discipline, depending on the conditions in which it is conducted. In the case of child labor, however, it can be particularly damaging, since it occurs together with precarious living conditions, causing losses in education, and eventually in earning power. All together, the association of the factors mentioned above result in vulnerability, which results in the main health problems identified in the target population (BRASIL, 2000).

Data from the International Labor Organization indicate that child-teen labor is increasing globally. It has been calculated that, on the whole planet, two hundred and fifty million children and adolescents, aged 5 to 14 are workers. About half of them work full-time, every day of the year. Among those 250 million workers, approximately fifty to sixty million, between 5 and 11 years of age, work in conditions of considerable danger to them, due to their young age (OIT, 1999).

In Brazil, the National Survey by Domestic Sampling (IBGE, 2001) shows that the child labor force, between 5 and 17 years old, has 5,428,515 people, representing 12% of the general population in that group. Agricultural areas have 2,377,826 while urban areas have 3,104,689 of this portion of the population, with the majority (41%) not receiving any type of recompense for their work whatsoever. The rates for unpaid work, in the age group of 5 to 9 years, are even higher, representing 92%. Approximately half of all children and teens occupied in labor activities, work with chemicals, machines, tools or other instruments that expose them to risks of illness, accidents or early death.

According to the survey mentioned, the levels of education of child laborers was 80%, compared to 91% among non-workers. The difference among the two rates was confirmed for all the nation's regions. Nevertheless, the data show that child labor has been diminishing over the years nationwide. From 1992 to 2001, those who worked fell 3.7% to 1.8%, among children 5 to 9 years old; from 20.4% to 11.6% among those 10 to 14 years old; and from 47% to 31.5% of 15- to 17-year-olds. Governmental policies that encourage access to and regular attendance in school and others that fight child labor were identified as the main factors contributing to the reduction observed (IBGE, 2001).

In the state of Minas Gerais, 578,728 (13%) subjects in the age group mentioned are workers, with 236,778 (41%) receiving no pay. The number of girls aged 5 to 17 already working is 193,568 (33%) in this state. It should be taken into account, however that some of the work done by these girls is unknown, such as cleaning, whether in their own homes or in others', far from the reach of governmental regulations (TAVARES, 2002).

In Brazil, the main activities that constitute child labor in the primary economic sector are: cutting sugarcane and *sisal* (hemp plants), coal mining and harvests; in the secondary sector: assistants in industry in general; in the tertiary sector: office errand-boys, babysitters, uniformed clerks, housemaids, gofers; and in the informal work sector: street labor, street vendors; and finally, the illegal work of drug trafficking and prostitution (CRUZ NETO & MOREIRA, 1998). Children aged 10 to 13 work, in most cases, in agricultural activity, moving into the service sector as they mature (SCHWARTZMAN, 1999).

Marques (2001) observed that children three and four years old working in the streets, in Belo Horizonte, are seen by customers as "cute little things." According to a mother interviewed by Marques: "He was so small that the men there in the bar measured his leg with a hand. It was palm-length. They bounced him on laps and exclaimed: *his leg is one palm-length!* The majority of the families studied by this author were included in governmental programs of financial welfare.

Money earned by children and teens constitute relevant portions of the overall family income among poor households (CRUZ NETO & MOREIRA, 1998; MARQUES, 2001; FACCHINI, 2003). In rural areas, 9% of all children that work



contribute more than 30% of the total monthly family income (BANCO MUNDIAL, 1994).

Regarding educational loss, despite the fact that, in theory, child labor should not prevent them from studying (SCHWARTZMAN, 1999), it has been shown that, in the state of Minas Gerais, 60,590 subjects of the 5 to 17 year age group do not attend school because they need to help with the domestic labor, are working outside the home, or are looking for work (IBGE, 2001).

In the six years of its existence, this is the first internal study of PEBE dedicated to a wide and comprehensive evaluation that can locate areas in need of readjustment and redirection.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Design**

This is a descriptive study of the socio-demographic profile and prevalence of cases of child labor of welfare family dependents, with emphasis on their occupations and school attendance.

### **Period and Location of Investigation**

Between the months of October 2003 and July 2004, 11,334 records of the *Programa Bolsa-Escola Municipal* (PEBE) files were studied, in order to find cases of child labor and the associated morbidities collected by the technical staff during the time the families were followed.

### **Source of Research Data**

Every record corresponds to a family receiving benefits from the *Programa Bolsa-Escola Municipal* (PEBE). The records show the enrollment forms and visits to the residence since the time of enrollment. These forms include registration data,

information about housing and hygienic conditions and space organization, children or teens not in school, total family income and per capita, health conditions and observations made by the team who visited the residence.

The forms used to evaluate continuation in the program were studied. They are filled out annually at the time the benefit recipient is approached, with the following information: housing conditions, the eating habits and health of the beneficiaries and of their dependents. These forms additionally contain information about children in school and not in school, and possible working conditions in the previous year. Finally, attached to such records are reports of visits to the residence and any extra calls for meetings.

It should be emphasized here that the teams that visit the residences have been trained to interview every family with the same previously formulated and standardized questions. Nevertheless, recording such visits has been done with a lack of systematization, making it difficult to collect data referring to child labor.

### **Procedures**

To better systematize the data collected, a specific protocol was created in order to detail instances of child labor. The top of the protocol was reserved for the notation of such information as “name,” “record number,” and “address.” It also contained seven spaces to fill in current data about the child and his work history: “name and date of birth,” “place of work,” “type of job,” “amount earned,” “illness,” “school” (where the child is enrolled) and previous work.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were systematized, analyzed and prepared using the software Microsoft Excel® enabling the construction of graphs and tables that help with the

visualization of the target group's characteristics and those of the work activities involved.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Programs of financial welfare developed and the policies for prevention of child labor and for schooling**

PEBE's objectives are wide-reaching, because, besides guaranteeing a child's continued presence in school, it has objectives of following affective, cognitive and psychomotor development with the integral perspective of developing mature citizenship for the children and adolescents involved, among others (BELO HORIZONTE, 1997).

The necessity of forming a policy of recompense in order to implement another more basic and universal objective, such as the case of education, stems from the affirmation, as Borges believes (2003), that missed school is directly related to poverty. Some of the poorest, as mentioned above, are driven to send their children into the workforce or domestic labor in order to raise their income to survival level. By this reasoning, the use of means of stimulating school attendance are justified, such as is the case with the School Welfare Program *Programa Bolsa Escola de Belo Horizonte*.

The data provided by IBGE (2001) confirm Borges' beliefs (*op. cit.*). In 2001, the institute verified 99% schooling of children who receive welfare benefits from social programs, as compared with only 88% among children in no program.

Regarding the prevalence of child-teen labor, during the period from 1992 to 2001, it was reduced from 20% to 13%, with this change being attributed to welfare financial assistance programs such as Bolsa Escola and PETI - *Programa de*

*Prevenção e Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil*—the Program for Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor (IBGE, 2001). It can be assumed that the tendency for early working to decrease stems from local programs, among them that of Belo Horizonte, since municipal and state programs take precedence over federal programs.

PETI was introduced in 1996, initially in rural areas, focusing on activities recognized to be burdensome. According to Cardoso & Souza (2002), by 1999, the program assisted nearly 10% of all working children in Brazil, having succeeded in reducing early labor and increasing school attendance.

Both PETI and *Bolsa Escola* gave money to poor families, with the former directed toward rural populations and the latter to urban. Currently, the Federal Government is working toward a fusion of the two programs, centralizing the management under the Ministry of Social Development and the Fight Against Starvation, in order to maximize resources and guarantee interdepartmental action at the local level. The objective is to fight poverty and encourage access to schools and to health programs.

### **O PEBE – report after seven years**

PEBE relies on resources from the municipal budget (table 1). The annual cost of benefits has been estimated at 3% of available municipal funds, but in reality it has never cost more than 1.6% (BORGES, 2003).

During the registration process, 27,419 families asked to be included as welfare recipients, but only 41% of them were eventually enrolled in the program.

An external analysis finished in 2003 can be found in the Master's degree dissertation of E. M. Borges, identifying two distinct characteristics in relation to

existing programs in the nation. The first refers to its genesis in the Legislation, guaranteeing institutional support and continuity. The second refers to its target population due to the inadequacy of municipal resources. For Borges, the concentration allows greater resources to be focused on each family selected. Note that PEBE's monthly benefit of R\$ 168 (\$ 56 U.S.) is greater than those existing elsewhere in the nation. The value of the monthly federal benefit, in the case of the *Bolsa Família* Program, varies from R\$ 50 to 95 (\$ 16 to 32 U.S.).

The amount of the financial benefit brought positive results into the lives of the beneficiaries, pulling countless families out of indigence. Nevertheless, Borges' study (2003) shows 92% of the sample studied still living in poverty.

If, on the one hand, Borges concludes that certain objectives of PEBE have been met, relative to conquering extreme poverty, as her data prove; on the other hand, regarding the fight against missed classes and dropping out of school, there is a gap. Data from PEBE, regarding the fight against extreme poverty, show that there is a serious discrepancy between the attendance hoped for and that found amongst the children and adolescent recipients of the PEBE benefits. Moreover, school attendance is not synonymous with education (PAPARELLI, 2004).

### **School attendance and early work**

The data obtained in the first stage of this investigation showed school attendance of the beneficiaries to be around 77% (Belo Horizonte, 2004), less than the 85% predefined by the regulations established for PEBE.

It is one of the lowest rates in the nation, as shown by the Facchini *et al.* (2003), study conducted in Pelotas, no Rio Grande do Sul, finding attendance of

95%, and the nationwide survey made by IBGE (2001) showing 86% for all of Brazil.

According to the data of the institution mentioned, the rate of education of beneficiaries in social programs focusing on education reaches even 99%, that is, much higher than the rates found among the PEBE population.

Attendance by children who work continues to be lower than that of non-workers, and the early entry into the workforce reduces future salaries (CARDOSO & SOUZA, 2002).

Failures in the educational system may contribute to the rate of drop-outs among children and teens, and also stimulate early working. Pedagogical models, comfort at school, school lunches, and welfare benefits for poor families should facilitate access to school and continued attendance of poor children (PAPARELLI, 2004).

School attendance by the beneficiaries of PEBE who also work has been calculated at 78.6% (table 2). This means that the school does not work toward ending child labor by its students, at least 2,197 of them, meaning 6% of the population of dependents who report themselves as workers [table 3] (BELO HORIZONTE, 2004)

It should be noted, however, that this estimate is lower than reality, due to the likelihood of not reporting work, since school attendance is a condition for enrolling and continuing in the benefits program, and also, these data were obtained from records that do not contain a space dedicated to reporting whether or not the dependents are working.

### **Is the goal of guaranteed schooling being met?**

Passetti (2002), analyzing the state proposal for guaranteeing education, criticizes the policy. He claims that the policy is weak and incomplete, since the school cannot replace lack of socialization and often works only as a location for aid. The seriousness of the question is apparent exactly when the success of public school is under attack, with nationwide research revealing disturbing data about the quality of teaching being done. Illiterate adults who nonetheless have secondary school diplomas find themselves equally without any chance for a life with dignity.

Currently under discussion is the role of programs guaranteeing a minimum income and that of basic public policies, regarding education and health, for example. Perhaps, to enrich the debate, it may be necessary to introduce the idea that recovering membership in society is more important than meeting basic survival needs, and that “human rights are combined with a daily incivility in the form of violence, prejudice and discrimination” (TELLES, 1999:141).

This research shows that it is not merely missed classes (table 4) that leads to a lack of education. To attend classes after working around the clock does not lead to learning. Working and studying leads to disadvantages in one’s adult life, as has already been mentioned. Tired, physically and cognitively run down by other activities leaves them with little time to do homework or properly follow lessons in the classroom.

The financial welfare policy does not prevent the double-life (school-work) led by the beneficiaries of PEBE. Under this system, it can be assumed that children and teens are too tired and run down to resist noxious elements in their

environment. In brief, the welfare benefits can increase the likelihood of school attendance, but they cannot guarantee the choice of schooling over working.

Table 5 shows that children and teens work most often in occupations damaging to their physical and mental health, as is the case with work in strangers' homes or in the street.

The most frequently exercised jobs were domestic service (at least 442) and work on the street (at least 448 kids). Both expose the subjects to various dangers. It should be remembered that the International Labor Organization has launched campaigns and studies designed to encourage the Brazilian government to include domestic child labor as among the worst kinds of work, that is comparable to slavery, illegal tasks and prostitution.

The study cited above by Facchini *et al.* (2003) conducted in Pelotas with a group of 4,924 subjects between 6 and 17 years of age, revealed that 88% of them do some kind of unofficial work. The greatest amount is found among 14 to 17-year-olds, a trend observed in other studies. The majority of cases can be found in the service sector, including domestic labor, and in the commercial sector, representing 44.5% and 34%, respectively. It can be inferred, superficially, that being forced to study, they work less and thus, would be less exposed to workplace dangers and work-related accidents. Keep in mind that the incidence of accidents does not only depend on an extended time spent working but also on an increase in tasks and the worker's state of health (MINAYO-GOMEZ & MEIRELLES, 1997) as well as an extension of the workplace from the home to the outside world (WALDVOGEL, 2002; MINAYO & ASSIS, 1994).



## **Children are not miniature adults**

Without doubt, children and teens do not experience the effects of working conditions in the same way as adults. They show a greater propensity, as was mentioned above, to suffer work-related accidents than adults do. Characteristics of youths that differentiate them from adult workers (and can increase their risk of accidents and sickness) include little experience, physical and psychological immaturity, and the need to combine work with study.

Research into psycho-social aspects of early working point to both positives and negatives (NIOSH, 1997). If, on the one hand, beginning work before adulthood can help the child to acquire skills that will be developed throughout life; on the other hand, the possibility of acquiring them, depending on the way in which the work is structured, can expose the youths to unhealthy conditions that interfere with their overall development. Thus, the fact of early entrance into the workforce is not always positive, on the contrary, as we shall see further on, working conditions are often contrary to development and growth.

There is an important maxim held in pediatrics that says *children are not miniature adults*. Many of their biological systems will not be fully mature until they are 18 years old. Despite a physical appearance similar to that of adults, their bodies are not yet mature. Anatomical, physiological and psychological capabilities of these individuals are in a phase of development distinct from that of adults. It is important to remember their particular aspects of height, weight, muscular mass, corporal composition and specific needs for sleep. These differences can be considered specific risk factors for work-related accidents and illness.

Adolescents have different heights, composing a distinct group from that of adults. A lack of combination among the machinery utilized, the measurements of the ideal operator and the muscular strength of children and teens can increase the risk factor of accidents on the job. Studies show that certain weights, heights and ages are associated with high rates of accidents with machines. NIOSH (1997) notes: operators between 5 and 14 years of age have a higher rate of accidents than adolescents or adults; operators of 1 meter and 52 cm or less have a higher rate of accidents than the rest; operators weighing less than 56.7 Kg or more than 90.3 Kg have higher rates of accidents than the rest.

Working with equipment and machines designed for an average adult makes young people adopt unhealthy postures and force muscles to surpass their present muscular capacity, at a stage of incomplete development.

Adolescents submitted to severe physical stresses have a higher rate of bone fractures. Studies have proposed the hypothesis that undeveloped bone structure explains the difference in the tendency to have accidents as compared to adults.

Adolescence is marked by high rates of growth, which are surpassed only by those in childhood. During these periods of growth spurts, lack of motor coordination can also increase the risk of work-related accidents (NIOSH, 1997).

The need for sleep of a child laborer is also different from that of an adult. The transition from the standard sleep/waking cycle of a child to that of a mature adult is a long and gradual process that takes years to complete. The adult average need for less sleep (8 hours per night) than children need, is only noticeable after 18 years of age. An adolescent's need for sleep can be up to 9

hours per night. Observe that working and studying leaves these youths fewer opportunities to meet their need for sleep. Transversal studies have measured an average of seven hours of sleep per night among students of secondary school who work half-time.

Adolescents during growth spurts need more time to sleep than others. Episodes of sleepiness during the morning and after lunch have a physiological basis, which can explain the reports of teachers, who call these students “half-awake,” especially during morning classes.

A heavy work schedule can increase the need for sleep, and not being fully met, this can result in sleep disorders, fatigue, and higher rates of work-related accidents (NIOSH, 1997).

In addition to interfering with the time spent sleeping, work seems to interfere with the quality of sleep as well. In the case of children and teens, the needs imposed by the school are associated with social pressure, combining to create sleep disorders and daytime fatigue, especially during the workweek, and particularly among kids who work more than 20 hours per week.

The cumulative effects of sleep deprivation and daytime fatigue are also associable with greater risk of accidents on the job, as the capacity to pay attention to tasks and to be alert is diminished.

In Brazil, Nobre (2003) cites a diagnostic of inspections conducted on plantations that produce *sisal* (hemp-fiber) in Bahia. The activities performed by the children require physical strength and over-forcing of the osteo-muscular structures. Risk of accident was reported, mainly the danger of puncturing an eye during the transport or cutting of the *sisal* plant.

Besides the aspects already mentioned, such as muscular capacity, state of the skeleton, motor balance and the recuperating effects of sleep, the relationship of children with their environment is stronger than that of an adult. Immature living beings have maximum vulnerability to their environment, which decreases during the growth process, but remains relevant for many years. The younger a child is, the more dependent on the environment and the more sensitive to its attacks: an adult will react, fight, flee, kill in the process of adaptation; a child needs to be protected (MARCONDES *et al.*, 1992).

At birth individuals receive a series of characteristics that will determine their physical features and their personality. Nevertheless, children's development depends on the interactions they will establish with their environment. Thus, the family, peers, the school all play a role in the emphasis or repression of certain personality traits. It is the educational process that allows human beings to take advantage of the progress already achieved of the civilization in which they grow. What educative process can be the result of work situations in which minors limited by their general precarious living conditions, are moreover punished by time restrictions and work-related dangers?

The same conditions that provoke health risks seem to contribute to the development of an ever-increasing degree of tolerance toward de-humanization currently present in the working world. This effect can be seen the humiliation that workers are submitted to in most working environments: restrictive regulations that leave little room for self-management in the performance of one's job, negligence in implementation of collective means of protecting against the risk factors in the

workplace, absence of comfort, motivation for competition, etc. In school, the little workers are targets of discrimination (CARDOSO, 2003).

Experience is necessary to build skills and competence that change the lives of individuals in their jobs and personal lives, who further receive opportunities for future acquisitions, continuing their developmental process. With unstructured working conditions and strong physical demands, children and teens do not find themselves in the appropriate situations to develop skills that would later permit them to acquire others. Pierrad (1987) when referring to the knowledge and abilities that must be collected by individuals, quotes a phrase coined by a former child laborer “this deep mental silence that maintains the poverty of the operator” illustrating the consequences of blocking the capability to learn and creativity during the phase of development when children are found working.

The development process is threatened when, in early stages, individuals are submitted to physical and cognitive demands incompatible with their capabilities and the needs of that moment in their young lives.

As Marcondes (*op. cit.*) states, “A child needs movement and rest, security and risks, socialization and autonomy, imitation and recreation, fiction and reality, to feel and to act on things.” Can the working world offer the means to respond to these needs? At least in terms of working on the streets, the answer is negative. Deprived of these conditions, what are the future consequences to the affective and mental resources of these children?

It can be expected that such individuals entering prematurely into the aggressive work world and whose context for living are so precarious would have mental resources not fully developed. Thus, attributes such as intuition, common

sense, capability to observe and to reason, comprehension of things, self-initiative; those aspects not stimulated as they should have been in childhood and adolescence would be impoverished in the adult phase.

At their jobs, kids and teens are not apprentices, but most of the time just helpers. That means that they do those tasks that can not be accomplished by adults, due to the small dimensions of the job, such as entering an oven, for example; without being able to do the main job themselves, however (DIAS *et al.*, 2001). Cognitive abilities not fully developed favor this situation of marginalization on the job, which then, in a vicious cycle, prevents the acquisition of new skills. The story of a butcher specializing in beef cuts illustrates the “weight” of early entrance in the world of work: “It is the only thing I learned how to do, because I started working so young and didn’t have time to learn anything else,” (personal communication).

Due to tiredness when at school, it can be assumed that they will have less energy to respond to the encouragement to learn. With their schooling incomplete, they continue to work on the periphery of real jobs, lacking the qualifications and even the pre-requisites to develop such qualifications, so that they continue to submit themselves to dangerous lowest-level jobs, many times reproducing the family situation in which they were raised (ASSUNÇÃO & DIAS, 2002).

If adults complain that long working hours represent a loss of time for leisure, reading, intimacy; for children this situation exacerbates the effects of lost time for contact with other universes that could offer them motivation and development of their potential.

An evolution in the production process on the one hand saves the motor-coordination and physical strength of humans; on the other hand, by portioning and dividing the tasks, in a context of rigid time constraints, it has created a type of mental suffering (DEJOURS, 1993). It must be understood that later on, workers who were forced prematurely into the working world will suffer doubly from the repercussions of a kind of job that leaves no space for creativity. It can be observed that children, whose physio-psycho-affective development requires situations in which they can let free their imagination and make-believe, will probably have these possibilities totally limited to the context of work-family or work-family-school.

Even aside from the time spent on the work activity itself, the type of work does not encourage the imaginative side of their personalities: playing, games, learning to live with differences, etc.

Deprived of the caloric intake they need and varied social stimulation, these children suffer more from unhealthy conditions.

A study of children and students living in the most polluted sections of the city of Rotterdam, cited by Marcondes (*op. cit.*) showed lower weight and height among the children who lived in the most polluted areas, unrelated to socioeconomic differences. Other effects found by epidemiological studies about pediatric health of kids exposed to atmospheric pollution include: lower hemoglobin levels, lower number of red blood cells, age measured by bone growth at six months behind actual age.

Allergy problems, inflammatory eye diseases, respiratory infections, influenza, bronchitis, and lowered activity level are possible effects of exposure to toxic substances in the air.

Besides climatic and atmospheric conditions, physical activity increases the effects of chemical agents on the respiratory tract. Add this to the effects of the physical burdens of work and to the effects of dystrophic illness associated with the malnutrition to which these kids are subject, due to the low family income.

As Wisner states (1982), workers whose state of health is least favorable are exactly those who must shoulder heavy workloads, the same that have their abilities reduced very young from events during their childhood or even before they were born, they are those who will suffer the results of dangerous working conditions.

Negative living and environmental conditions, including those during pregnancy, such as obstetric trauma, alcoholism of the parents, malnutrition of the mother, affective and intellectual needs left unmet, will leave traces on the health of the children, making them particularly less resistant to bad working conditions.

Negative conditions of the organism are considered predisposing causes of illness and death. Leone & Alcántara (1994:28) declare: "Perhaps of no illness can it be said that it did not permit, facilitate or cause the introduction or exacerbation of another," and according to these authors, in a child this is even more apparent.

### **Perspectives for PEBE**

Child-youth labor has been shown to be a phenomena with many causes and to be multifaceted, impossible to reduce to a simplistic analysis of the children and adolescents, who work, as a rule, because they must contribute to the survival of



the family group. Causes located in poverty and unavailable formal employment are not sufficient to explain the phenomenon.

The questions posed serve as directional hints for the next stage of investigation in the attempt to understand if the case of working on the streets is encouraged by the family and what is its weight in the established division of labor. The next step in this investigation is to delineate what family participation is involved in determining the work of their dependents. Once such information is gathered, an effort to adjust policies directing PEBE can be predicted, in order to overcome the distance between the institutional objectives and the real needs of the beneficiaries.

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Table 1  
Budget for PEBE by the Municipal Government of Belo Horizonte (PBH)

year	Total budget of PBH	portion granted to PEBE (%)	
1997	621,515,685.37	386,070.00	0.062%
1998	686,775,301.81	2,900,164.09	0.422%
1999	732,696,965.68	6,474,809.24	0.884%
2000	822,685,869.86	10,425,029.34	1.267%
2001	933,599,367.42	15,589,701.73	1.670%
2002	1,078,304,718.73	16,132,545.70	1.500%

Source: PBH-UFMG (2004)

Table 2  
Distribution by region of the Belo Horizonte Municipal Area of dependents of PEBE who work (0-18 years of age), according to school enrollment records

Region	number of dependents working	number of dependents enrolled in school	
East	350	280	80%
Northeast	330	271	82%
Northwest	312	247	79%
West	229	170	74%
Venda Nova	228	176	77%
Pampulha	123	104	83%
North	280	226	81%
South-Central	164	114	70%
Barreiro	181	139	77%
Total	2 197	1 727	78.6 %

Source: PBH-UFMG (2004)

Table 3  
 Distribution by region of Belo Horizonte those PEBE dependents who work (0-18 years of age)

Region	number of dependent recipients of PEBE	number of dependent recipients of PEBE who work (%)
East	4 691	350 7.5%
Northeast	3 572	330 9.2%
Northwest	5 308	312 5.9%
West	3 960	229 5.8%
Venda Nova	4 904	228 4.6%
Pampulha	1 894	123 7.0%
North	4 707	280 6.0%
South-Central	4 186	164 4.0%
Barreiro	4 018	181 4.5%
Total	37 240	2197 6.0%

Source: PBH-UFMG (2004)

Table 4  
 Insufficient attendance at school by dependent recipients of  
 PEBE (7-14 year of age) by region of Belo Horizonte - 2003

Region	number of PEBE students	number of PEBE students with insufficient attendance (%)
East	2 738	689 25.1%
Northeast	1 774	456 25.7%
Northwest	2 571	569 22.1%
West	1 952	411 21.0%
Venda Nova	2 049	428 20.8%
Pampulha	1 117	300 26.8%
North	2 375	438 18.4%
South-Central	2 302	625 27.1%
Barreiro	2 249	440 19.5%
Total	19 127	4 356 22.7%

Source: PBH-UFMG (2004)

Table 5

Main types of occupations of children and adolescent dependents of PEBE who work - 2003

<b>Region</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>East</b>	office-boy/intern	17 %
	maid/domestic	16 %
	sales	13 %
<b>Barreiro</b>	not specified	27 %
	maid/domestic	17 %
	office-boy/intern	15 %
<b>Northeast</b>	maid/domestic	20 %
	not specified	19 %
	sales	12 %
<b>Northwest</b>	maid/domestic	21 %
	not specified	16 %
	office-boy/intern	11 %
<b>North</b>	maid/domestic	22 %
	not specified	16 %
	construction	7.5%
<b>West</b>	maid/domestic	25 %
	not specified	16 %
	office-boy/intern	8 %
<b>South-Central</b>	maid/domestic	15 %
	not specified	15 %
	office-boy/intern	14 %
<b>Pampulha</b>	not specified	22 %
	maid/domestic	17 %
	construction	8 %
<b>Venda Nova</b>	maid/domestic	26 %
	not specified	21 %
	office-boy/intern	13 %

Source: PBH-UFMG (2004)