

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS UNDER THE *ESTADO NOVO*: CULTURAL AND VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS AND IDEOLOGICAL MESSAGES

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the cultural representations present in primary school textbooks during the *Estado Novo* regime in Portugal. It explores how education was used as an ideological tool to instil social values and reinforce the authoritarian governance of the time. Through an analysis of the content and structure of school textbooks, the study identifies key themes such as nationalism, moral discipline and the promotion of traditional roles. The research adopts a qualitative and historical approach, focusing on the relationship between education and propaganda to uncover the subtle mechanisms by which the regime influenced the minds of young people. The results highlight the crucial role of school textbooks as cultural tools for shaping minds and maintaining social control in the context of an authoritarian State.

KEYWORDS

Estado Novo, school textbooks, cultural representations, ideology, propaganda

MANUAIS ESCOLARES DO PRIMEIRO CICLO NO *ESTADO NOVO*: REPRESENTAÇÕES CULTURAIS, VISUAIS E MENSAGENS IDEOLÓGICAS

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa as representações culturais presentes nos manuais escolares do ensino primário durante o regime do *Estado Novo* em Portugal. Explora como a educação foi utilizada como instrumento ideológico para incutir valores sociais e reforçar a governação autoritária da época. Através da análise do conteúdo e da estrutura dos manuais escolares, o estudo identifica temas-chave como o nacionalismo, a disciplina moral e a promoção de papéis tradicionais. A investigação adota uma abordagem qualitativa e histórica, focando-se na relação entre educação e propaganda, para desvendar os mecanismos subtis pelos quais o regime influenciava as mentes mais jovens. Os resultados destacam o papel crucial dos manuais escolares como ferramentas culturais para moldar mentes e manter o controlo social no contexto de um Estado autoritário.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Estado Novo, manuais escolares, representações culturais, ideologia, propaganda

1. INTRODUCTION

The *Estado Novo* regime, led by António de Oliveira Salazar and Marcello Caetano, was a corporatist and authoritarian regime that ruled Portugal between 1933 and 1974. During this period, education was deliberately used as a mechanism to support and sustain the regime's ideological framework. Schools became spaces for indoctrination, and primary school textbooks played a crucial role as tools for shaping the moral, cultural and social values of future generations. In this study, "cultural representations" are understood as the ways in which the social world was symbolically represented and constructed in school textbooks, influencing the perception of reality and the construction of identity. The analysis is informed by theories of social constructivism and social representations (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), which help to understand how the regime used education to promote its ideology.

Through the content of these textbooks, the *Estado Novo* sought to instil loyalty to the regime, reinforce conservative values and legitimise its governance by integrating the regime's ideology into everyday school life. This research analyses the cultural representations incorporated into primary school textbooks during the *Estado Novo*, focusing on how these materials reflected and reinforced the regime's ideological and social constructs. The relevance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding the interrelationship between education and propaganda, highlighting the use of school textbooks as instruments of cultural and political control in an authoritarian context. By exploring these dynamics, the study sheds light on the broader implications of education in shaping social realities and perpetuating systems of power.

The research question guiding this analysis is: "how did primary school textbooks during the *Estado Novo* in Portugal reflect and promote cultural representations aligned with the regime's ideology?". To answer this question, the thematic content, narratives, and pedagogical strategies used in these educational materials to disseminate nationalist, conservative, and moralistic values are examined. The study also aims to identify the implicit and explicit cultural messages conveyed by the textbooks, providing an in-depth view of how education was used to consolidate the regime's ideological agenda.

The objectives of this research are: (1) to analyse the predominant ideological and cultural values represented in primary school textbooks during the *Estado Novo* and (2) to critically reflect on the role of education in the construction and legitimisation of authoritarian power.

By situating this research in the socio-political context of the *Estado Novo*, the study highlights how the regime's policies and priorities were reflected in the educational domain. Education under the *Estado Novo* was characterised by a rigid curriculum, centralised control and a strong emphasis on obedience, nationalism and Catholic values. School textbooks were designed to reinforce these principles, presenting an idealised view of Portugal's past, promoting traditional roles in the family and glorifying rural life as the foundation of national identity. Through these narratives, the regime sought to cultivate a national identity aligned with its conservative and autocratic ideology.

This study not only contributes to the historiography of education during the *Estado Novo* but also offers a critical perspective on the broader relationship between education

and power. It highlights the importance of analysing educational materials as cultural artefacts capable of shaping ideologies and influencing social development, particularly in authoritarian regimes.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative and socio-historical approach, using documentary analysis as a methodological tool to interpret cultural and ideological representations. The qualitative paradigm is particularly suited to exploring complex social phenomena in their historical context. It allows the researcher to uncover subtle meanings in primary school textbooks from the *Estado Novo* period. This methodology prioritises understanding implicit cultural and ideological narratives, as emphasised in academic work on qualitative research (Kripka et al., 2015; Mesquita et al., 2009).

Four primary school textbooks published during the *Estado Novo* in the 1950s were analysed. The textbooks were selected based on their historical relevance to the *Estado Novo* regime, considering their role in ideological dissemination and the representational content they offered. The selection took into account the following criteria: official approval under the "single textbook" policy, implemented to standardise educational content and ensure alignment with the regime's ideological objectives; and explicit or implicit reference to the central themes of the *Estado Novo*, such as nationalism, Catholic moral principles and traditional gender roles in society. The textbooks analysed are characterised by their didactic structure, with texts, illustrations and exercises aimed at primary school pupils. A total of 638 pages were analysed, covering textual and visual content.

The following strategies were used to analyse the content of the school textbooks: content analysis to identify and quantify the presence of themes, keywords and images related to the ideology of the *Estado Novo* (Bardin, 1977/2015); and iconographic analysis to interpret the meaning of images and visual symbols in promoting the values of the regime (Panofsky, 1939/2016). The choice of these strategies allowed for a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of cultural representations in school textbooks, capturing both the manifest and latent aspects of the *Estado Novo* ideology.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS: DEFINITION AND THEORETICAL APPROACH

In the context of this study, we understand cultural representations as the ways in which the social world is symbolically represented, constructed and transmitted through practices and discourses. Cultural representations are not mere reflections of reality but active constructions that shape the way we perceive and interact with the world (Hall, 1992/2006). Stuart Hall (1992/2006) argues that cultural representations are imbued with power and serve to construct and maintain dominant ideologies. In this sense, the analysis of cultural representations allows us to examine how the *Estado Novo* used

education to create and perpetuate its vision of the country. Our theoretical approach is based on a social constructivist perspective, which recognises the fundamental role of culture in the formation of individual and collective identity (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that social reality is constructed through processes of institutionalisation and legitimation, in which cultural representations play a crucial role. We are also inspired by theories of social representations, which explore how social groups create and share common understandings of reality (Moscovici, 1988). The author highlights how social representations influence individuals' attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, shaping their understanding of the social world.

It is important to distinguish this approach from other theoretical perspectives, which tend to emphasise the resistance and agency of subaltern groups in the production of cultural meanings (Storey, 2015). While we recognise the importance of individual and collective agency, our study focuses on the power of the *Estado Novo* to shape cultural representations through the education system, using it as an ideological apparatus (Althusser, 2014). Althusser (2014) argues that the ideological apparatuses of the State, such as schools, play a fundamental role in reproducing dominant social relations, transmitting the ideology of power and ensuring the submission of individuals.

We must also take into account Chartier's (1985, 2015) theoretical approaches to the role of texts in the construction of cultural practices and representations. These approaches help to understand how educational strategies contribute to a profound and lasting impact on society.

3.2. EDUCATION AND IDEOLOGY

The *Estado Novo* (1933–1974), led by António de Oliveira Salazar and Marcello Caetano, is a paradigmatic example of how education can be strategically used to instil authoritarian and nationalist ideologies. By integrating education with political objectives, the regime sought to shape the population, using policies and institutional structures to consolidate its control over Portuguese society.

Ideology, which is understood as a set of beliefs and values that shape the understanding of social reality (Thompson, 1991), played a fundamental role in education during the *Estado Novo*. By promoting a particular worldview, the regime sought to influence students' attitudes and behaviours, ensuring their conformity with the established order.

A central feature of the *Estado Novo*'s educational strategy was the integration of patriotic narratives into school curricula. The content emphasised a glorified view of Portugal's history, celebrating national heroes and colonial achievements as symbols of the country's greatness (Duarte, 2024b). School textbooks were carefully selected to align with the regime's ideology, presenting a selective and mythologised version of the past that reinforced the principles of loyalty to the nation and its leaders. This construction of an idealised collective memory aimed to create a strong and cohesive sense of national identity, essential for the maintenance of the regime (Pinto, 2014; Serrão, 2018). It should also be noted that school textbooks marginalised oral traditions and regional folklore, considering them incompatible with the regime's

ideological objectives. As highlighted in Diniz's analysis (1994), the deliberate exclusion of short stories and other forms of popular narrative from the curriculum reflected the regime's preference for a homogeneous and rigidly controlled cultural identity.

Subjects such as history and moral education became central, promoting reverence for the ideals of the *Estado Novo* and a sense of collective identity rooted in tradition and nationalism (Duarte, 2024b). School textbooks present a heroic view of Portugal's past, highlighting the figures of great explorers and conquerors and emphasising the civilising role of Portuguese colonisation. This nationalist narrative aimed to instil in children a sense of pride in their country and unconditional loyalty to the regime (Neto, 2015). Catholic values formed the backbone of the moral and educational framework of the *Estado Novo*, reinforcing obedience, discipline and traditional family roles. Religious principles were deeply intertwined with the regime's ideology in school textbooks, which often drew on Christian teachings to promote virtues such as humility and loyalty. Mineiro's analysis (2007) reveals that these materials were consistently aligned with Church doctrines, emphasising the sanctity of the family and its role in social stability.

Christian iconography was also instrumental in shaping students' perceptions. As Serra (2005) points out, visual elements such as crucifixes, representations of saints and moralistic illustrations were common in school textbooks. These images reinforced notions of moral discipline while associating the authority of the *Estado Novo* with divine legitimacy. Through this symbiotic relationship, the regime and the Church worked together to consolidate a vision of Portugal as a devout, orderly and united nation (Cruz, 1997).

António de Oliveira Salazar played a crucial role in defining these educational policies. Under his leadership, the regime implemented reforms aimed at centralising control of the education system. Measures such as Decree-Law No. 22,369 (Decreto-Lei n.º 22.369, 1933) of 30 March 1933, introduced standardised materials, including the "single textbook", which ensured that all students had access to the same ideologically oriented content. The "single textbook" was a fundamental tool for ensuring ideological uniformity throughout the country, eliminating diversity in educational materials and ensuring that all children received the same message (Decreto-Lei n.º 22.369, 1933).

Decree-Law No. 22,369 (Decreto-Lei n.º 22.369, 1933) and the introduction of the "single textbook" represented a break with the educational reforms of the First Republic (1910–1926). The First Republic sought to promote secularism, critical thinking, and civic engagement through the creation of co-educational schools, the expansion of teacher training programmes, and efforts to decentralise the education system. However, the *Estado Novo* considered these measures a threat to its authoritarian and nationalist agenda. Decree-Law No. 22,369 was part of a broader effort to reverse these changes, replacing them with policies that aligned education with the ideological pillars of the regime (Decreto-Lei n.º 22.369, 1933).

The centralisation of education under the *Estado Novo* went beyond the "single textbook" and encompassed broader administrative reforms. The Decree centralised decision-making authority in the Ministry of Education, removing influence from local governments and school boards (Decreto-Lei n.º 22.369, 1933). This hierarchical structure

allowed the regime to apply its policies uniformly across the country, ensuring that dissenting views were systematically excluded from the education system (Torgal, 2009).

Salazar's vision for education was not limited to the transmission of knowledge, it also aimed to cultivate a moral structure that aligned with the regime's values, positioning schools as instruments of social conformity and political indoctrination. Education was seen as a means of shaping children's character, instilling in them the values of discipline, obedience and respect for authority (Duarte, 2024a; Serra, 2005). Thus, one of the central objectives of the *Estado Novo*'s school textbooks was to foster unquestioning loyalty to the regime and its leader, António de Oliveira Salazar. Educational content consistently presented Salazar as a father figure whose wisdom and guidance ensured the well-being of the nation. The Salazarist concept of the "new man" captures this ideal: a citizen shaped by education to embody loyalty, conformity and sacrifice (Rosas, 2013).

The regime also introduced strict codes of conduct for teachers, requiring them to demonstrate loyalty to the State and adherence to its moral and ideological principles. Teachers who failed to meet these expectations faced dismissal or other sanctions. This climate of surveillance and control effectively transformed educators into agents of the State, charged with disseminating its ideological agenda (Cruz, 1998). The school thus became a space for ideological indoctrination, where teachers played the role of transmitters of the regime's values.

In this analysis, it is essential to consider Louis Althusser's (2014) perspective on the ideological apparatuses of the State. Althusser argues that the school is an ideological apparatus of the State that functions to reproduce social relations of production. In the context of the *Estado Novo*, schools played a crucial role in transmitting the dominant ideology, ensuring the submission of individuals and the maintenance of the regime's power. School textbooks and teachers were key instruments in this process, shaping children's minds according to the values and beliefs of the *Estado Novo*.

3.3. THE ROLE OF TEACHERS AS IDEOLOGICAL AGENTS

The *Estado Novo* assigned significant moral and political responsibilities to teachers. As role models, teachers were expected to embody the ideals of the regime, such as discipline, loyalty to the nation, and adherence to traditional Catholic values. They were seen not only as transmitters of knowledge but as figures responsible for instilling virtues such as obedience, patriotism, and devotion to authority in their students. In rural areas, teachers had even greater influence, serving as representatives of the regime in communities often isolated from other forms of State presence. Educational policies emphasised the duty of teachers to shape the moral character of their students, aligning them with *Estado Novo*'s vision of a hierarchical and disciplined society. The teaching profession was thus presented as a patriotic vocation, with educators seen as moral sculptors of youth, charged with perpetuating the values of the nation. This expectation was deeply rooted in the regime's belief that education was an essential tool for social conformity and national unity (Almeida, 2011; Serrão, 2018).

To maintain strict control over teachers, the *Estado Novo* imposed a rigid code of conduct that demanded unwavering loyalty to the regime. Teachers were closely monitored for signs of political dissent or behaviour that deviated from the moral and ideological standards prescribed by the regime. Their personal lives were also subject to scrutiny, including the need to obtain approval for marriage, especially in the case of female teachers, to ensure compliance with traditional family values. Those who failed to meet these expectations faced dismissal, public reprimands or other punitive sanctions. Inspections played a crucial role in ensuring compliance. Inspectors frequently visited schools to assess not only the quality of instruction but also the ideological content conveyed in classrooms. These inspections were designed to ensure that teachers strictly adhered to approved curricula and avoided introducing ideas contrary to the principles of the *Estado Novo*. The fear of sanctions created an environment of self-censorship among teachers, further limiting their professional autonomy (Almeida, 2011; Serrão, 2018).

The *Boletim Escola Portuguesa* (Portuguese School Bulletin) was a key tool in *Estado Novo*'s strategy to control teachers and disseminate its ideology. Published by the Ministry of Education, this bulletin guided teaching methods, curriculum content and professional expectations. It served as an instrument of ideological indoctrination, ensuring that teachers consistently promoted the regime's values in their classrooms. The bulletin included articles highlighting the importance of moral education and loyalty to the State, often featuring examples of model teachers who embodied these ideals. It also offered practical advice to educators in rural areas, reinforcing their role as agents of the regime in their communities. By constraining teachers to follow the guidelines set out in the bulletin, the *Estado Novo* standardised educational practices and minimised opportunities for alternative pedagogical approaches (Almeida, 2011; Serrão, 2018).

3.4. EDUCATION, GENDER AND CLASS

Education for girls was explicitly designed to align with the regime's motto — "God, country, family" — which reflected its traditionalist ideology. Curricula for female students predominantly emphasised domestic skills, moral instruction and religious education, preparing them for roles as wives, mothers and carers. Subjects such as home economics, sewing and childcare were prioritised over areas such as mathematics or science, which were considered unnecessary for women. The *Estado Novo* promoted the idea that women's main responsibility was to support their families and preserve the moral fabric of society. Organisations such as the *Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina* (Portuguese Female Youth) further reinforced these ideals, emphasising discipline, modesty and submission to male authority. Girls' education thus became a means of socialisation that perpetuated their secondary status, excluding them from professional opportunities and limiting their participation in public and intellectual life (Basto, 2015; Duarte, 2024b; Sousa, 2019).

The *Estado Novo*'s education system was also deeply stratified along class lines, reflecting and reinforcing the socio-economic hierarchies of the time. For the working classes, education was essentially vocational, with the aim of training skilled workers to

sustain the nation's industrial and agricultural economy. Technical schools offered training in practical trades such as carpentry, mechanics or sewing, which was in line with the regime's vision of a disciplined and productive workforce. These schools often operated under strict guidelines to ensure that students acquired skills considered essential for their social roles while being moulded to be loyal to the State. In contrast, academic education, especially at the secondary and university levels, was largely reserved for the elites. This more comprehensive and liberal education aimed to train professionals, administrators, and leaders who would occupy positions of influence in society. Access to this type of education required significant financial resources, creating a barrier that effectively excluded the working classes. The system thus perpetuated cycles of privilege, ensuring that leadership and influential roles remained confined to a narrow segment of society (Almeida, 2011; Pinto, 2014; Sousa, 2019).

The intersection of gender and class further exacerbated inequalities in the education system. Working-class girls faced double limitations: they were economically disadvantaged and subject to restrictive gender norms imposed by the regime. For them, access to education was often limited to a few years of primary school, after which they were directed towards vocational training or expected to leave school to help with domestic responsibilities or enter low-paid jobs. Girls from the middle and upper classes, although with slightly greater access to educational opportunities, remained constrained by curricula that emphasised their future roles as housewives. This stratification reflected the broader ideological framework of the *Estado Novo*, which sought to preserve a hierarchical and patriarchal society. By shaping education to reinforce class and gender roles, the regime ensured that individuals remained within predefined social categories, limiting upward social mobility and maintaining the stability of society in line with the regime's authoritarian vision (Almeida, 2011; Pinto, 2014; Sousa, 2019).

3.5. IDEOLOGICAL GOALS VS. REALITY

The *Estado Novo* publicly proclaimed the reduction of illiteracy as a priority, presenting it as an integral part of its project to build a "civilised" and "moral" society. However, an analysis of literacy rates during the regime reveals limited progress, particularly in rural areas and among the female population. At the beginning of the regime, the literacy rate was around 40%, with significant regional disparities: urban centres such as Lisbon and Porto had considerably higher literacy levels than the rural regions of Alentejo and Trás-os-Montes. Several decades later, in the 1960s, literacy rates had improved only modestly, reaching around 62%, which placed Portugal among the Western European countries with the highest illiteracy levels at the time. Women, especially in rural areas, faced the greatest disadvantages, with literacy levels substantially lower than those of men. These data highlight the limitations of *Estado Novo*'s educational policies, which favoured ideological indoctrination over robust investment in infrastructure and teacher training (Almeida, 2011; Pinto, 2014).

The persistence of low levels of schooling, reflected in these limited literacy rates, had a significant impact on the country's economic stagnation. The lack of a more

educated population restricted Portugal's ability to modernise and compete economically with other European countries (Pinto, 2014).

In addition, the *Estado Novo* education system was characterised by deep social stratification. For the working classes, education was often limited to the first years of primary school, with a focus on basic literacy and arithmetic, neglecting the development of critical thinking and academic progression. Vocational training predominated in the curricula for students from lower socio-economic strata, preparing them for manual occupations or other roles in line with the vision of a disciplined and hierarchical society. In contrast, children from wealthier families had easier access to secondary and higher education, which enabled them to take on leadership roles in business, administration and the liberal professions. This educational structure contributed to the perpetuation of socio-economic inequalities, ensuring the maintenance of the privileged status of the elites and confining the working classes to subordinate socio-economic positions. Limited access to education for the most disadvantaged populations was further exacerbated by insufficient investment in rural schools, where facilities were often poor and dropout rates particularly high (Almeida, 2011; Pinto, 2014; Sousa, 2019).

In short, although *Estado Novo*'s education system aimed to consolidate ideological conformity, the practical results fell short of creating the disciplined and unified society that the regime idealised. The priority given to ideological indoctrination often compromised the resolution of systemic problems, such as the shortage of qualified teachers, poor school facilities and high dropout rates, especially in rural areas. Statistics reveal these shortcomings: despite the stated goal of universal primary education, enrolment rates remained uneven and a significant number of children, especially in rural or low-income regions, dropped out of school before completing the cycle. In addition, the emphasis on ideological content in the curricula restricted the development of critical thinking and scientific skills, undermining Portugal's preparedness to face the rapid economic and technological changes of the second half of the 20th century. At the end of the regime in 1974, Portugal had a considerable educational deficit compared to other European countries, highlighting the failure of the *Estado Novo* to translate its objectives into effective social progress (Almeida, 2011; Pinto, 2014; Serrão, 2018).

4. ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

4.1. CATHOLICISM AND MORAL DISCIPLINE

The presence of Catholicism in the school textbooks of the *Estado Novo* was clearly evident in the religious iconography, which played a crucial role in transmitting moral and doctrinal messages. The illustrations analysed illustrate this strategic use of iconography.

Figure 1 shows the representation of the Immaculate Mary, a central figure in Catholic devotion and a symbol of purity and holiness. Her central position in the image, surrounded by decorative elements and religious invocations, highlights the importance attributed to the Marian figure in the educational context. The children depicted

at the bottom of the image, with their backs turned and in a respectful attitude, suggest a message of reverence and obedience to religious authority. The reference to the "Month of May", associated with religious celebrations and practices dedicated to Mary, reinforces the link between education and Catholic traditions (Ministério da Educação Nacional, 1954, p. 35).



Figure 1. Representation of Mary

Source. Taken from *Livro da Primeira Classe* (First Grade Textbook; 6th Edition), by Ministério da Educação Nacional (Ministry of National Education), 1954, p. 35. Photograph by Josué Duarte.

Note. Translation: "Mary Immaculate / Month of May / Month of lilies and roses / Month of Mary / Heart of Mary, give us your holy love / Holy Mary".

Figure 2 shows a christening scene, a central sacrament in the Catholic faith. The textual description emphasises the beauty of the ceremony and the purity of the christened child, comparing them to an angel. The presence of the godfather and godmother underlines the importance of the religious community in welcoming the new member of the Church. The reference to Easter Sunday, the day of the Lord's Resurrection, associates christening with a moment of celebration and renewal of faith (Ministério da Educação Nacional, 1958a, p. 14).

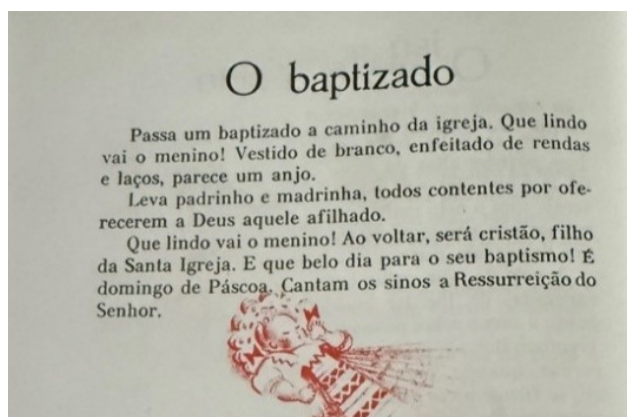


Figure 2. The christening

Source. Taken from *Livro da Segunda Classe* (Second Grade Textbook; 6th edition), by Ministério da Educação Nacional (Ministry of National Education), 1958a, p.14. Photograph by Josué Duarte.

Note. Translation: "The christening / A christening procession passes on its way to the church. How lovely the little boy looks! Dressed in white, adorned with lace and ribbons, he looks like an angel. / He is accompanied by his godfather and godmother, both delighted to offer this godchild to God. / How lovely the little boy looks! When he returns, he will be a Christian, a child of the Holy Church. And what a beautiful day for his christening! It is Easter Sunday. The bells are ringing out the Resurrection of the Lord".

Figure 3 illustrates the relationship between nature and divinity through a poem that attributes to God the creation of natural elements such as trees, skies, mountains, rivers, fruits and animals. This representation reinforces the idea of God as creator and supreme force, encouraging religious belief and devotion. The question-and-answer structure of the poem makes the message accessible and didactic, facilitating its memorisation and internalisation by children.



Figure 3. It was God, my love!

Source. Taken from *Livro da Primeira Classe* (First Grade Textbook; 6th edition) by Ministério da Educação Nacional (Ministry of National Education), 1954, p.83. Photograph by Josué Duarte.

Note. Translation: "It was God, my love! / 'Mommy, who made the trees? Who painted the blue sky? / Who made the mountains and hills? / Who made the rivers and springs?' / 'My sweetheart, it was God'. / 'Who made the beautiful fruits and the grace of each flower? / Who made the fish in the sea and the birds in the air?' / 'Who was it? It was God, my love!'"

This emphasis on religious values and Catholic morality coexisted with the promotion of traditional gender roles, as we will analyse in the next subchapter.

4.2. PATRIARCHAL GENDER ROLES

An analysis of school textbooks reveals the presence of visual and textual representations that reinforce traditional gender roles in Portuguese society during the *Estado Novo*. Figure 4 depicts a girl performing domestic tasks such as sweeping and tidying the house, reinforcing the idea that these are female responsibilities and instilling in girls, from an early age, their future role as "housewives" (Ministério da Educação Nacional, 1954, p.55). Figure 5 shows the figure of "Joaninha", a child who helps with household chores and prays regularly, emphasising the importance of the religious role and, once again, of women's responsibilities in the home. It is also possible to see from the same image that the mother is dedicated to caring for and organising the home. Both images emphasise the importance of the role of women in the domestic sphere, associating femininity with motherhood and domestic tasks (Ministério da Educação Nacional, 1958b, p.11).



Figure 4. *The housewife*

Source. Taken from *Livro da Primeira Classe* (First Grade Textbook; 6th edition) by Ministério da Educação Nacional (Ministry of National Education), 1954, p.55. Photograph by Josué Duarte.

Note. Translation: "The housewife / Emilita is very smart and resourceful, and she likes to help her mother. / 'Mother: I already know how to sweep the kitchen, arrange the chairs and dust. Let me set the table for dinner today'. / 'All right, my daughter. When you grow up, you shall be a good housewife'".



Figure 5. "Joaninha"

Source. Taken from *Livro de Leitura 3.ª Classe* (Third Grade Reading Book; 4th edition) by Ministério da Educação Nacional (Ministry of National Education), 1958b, p.11. Photograph by Josué Duarte.

Note. Translation: "Joaninha / As soon as Joaninha gets up, she washes, combs her hair, gets dressed and puts on her shoes. / When she goes to say good morning to her parents, her mother almost always fixes the bow in her hair a little better. / She says her prayers, has breakfast and heads off to school. / She is poor but very neat and clean, dressed without stains or tears. She is a delight to behold, with her black eyes, tanned skin and straight hair. / In the afternoon, she does the homework assigned by her teacher and helps her mother with the housework. She is very resourceful with the housework and already knows how to make things look lovely. / In the kitchen, when needed, she can prepare a meal that everyone enjoys. After supper, she cleans her shoes, packs everything she'll need for school the next day, says goodnight to everyone, and, after commending herself to God, she goes to bed and falls asleep peacefully."

Figure 6 depicts a group of girls making layettes for dolls. The text accompanying the image highlights the importance of knowing how to sew and take care of clothes, skills traditionally associated with the role of women as responsible for the family's clothing. This representation reinforces the idea that girls should be prepared to perform domestic tasks, perpetuating the gender division of labour.



Figure 6. The layettes

Source. Taken from *Livro da Primeira Classe* (First Grade Textbook; 6th edition) by (Ministry of National Education), 1954, p.51). Photograph by Josué Duarte.

Note. Translation: "The dolls' layettes / Maria da Conceição and Lurdes finished today the layettes for their two dolls: smock, bib, bonnet, dresses, knickers, vest, jacket".

Alongside the construction of gender roles, school textbooks also played an important role in promoting propaganda and obedience to the regime, a theme we will explore in the next subchapter.

4.3. PROPAGANDA AND OBEDIENCE

The promotion of obedience was a central element in the school textbooks of the *Estado Novo*, manifesting itself both in moralising historical narratives and in symbolic elements that appealed to patriotism.

Figure 7 and the accompanying text present "an example of loyalty" in the figure of Egas Moniz, emphasising the importance of keeping one's word and loyalty to one's superiors. This approach sought to instil in students the values that served the interests of the regime, using historical figures as role models (Ministério da Educação Nacional, 1970, p. 26).

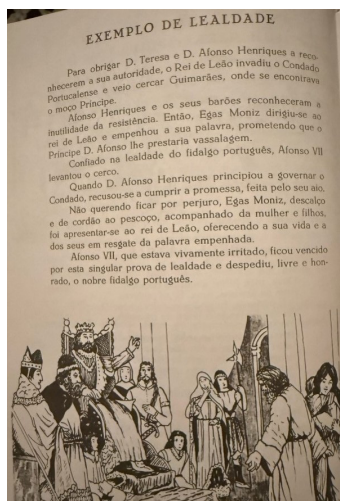


Figure 7. An example of loyalty

Source. Taken from *Livro de Leitura 4.ª Classe* (Fourth Grade Reading Book; 4th edition) by Ministério da Educação Nacional (Ministry of National Education), 1970, p.26. Photograph by Josué Duarte.

Note. Translation: "An Example of Loyalty / To compel Dona Teresa and Prince Afonso Henriques to acknowledge his authority, the King of León invaded the County of Portugal. He laid siege to Guimarães, where the young Prince was residing. / Afonso Henriques and his barons recognised the futility of resistance. Then, Egas Moniz approached the King of León and gave his word, promising that Prince Afonso would pay him homage. / Trusting in the loyalty of the Portuguese nobleman, Afonso VII lifted the siege. / When Afonso Henriques began to govern the County, he refused to fulfil the promise made by his tutor. / Not wishing to be forsworn, Egas Moniz, barefoot and with a rope around his neck, accompanied by his wife and children, presented himself to the King of León, offering his life and that of his family in ransom for the promise he had made. / Afonso VII, who was deeply angered, was moved by this singular demonstration of loyalty and dismissed the Portuguese nobleman, free and with honour".

Figure 8 includes an excerpt from a patriotic song and a representation of children from the *Mocidade Portuguesa* (Portuguese Youth) organisation singing, illustrating how music was used to stir up nationalist fervour and instil patriotic values from childhood.

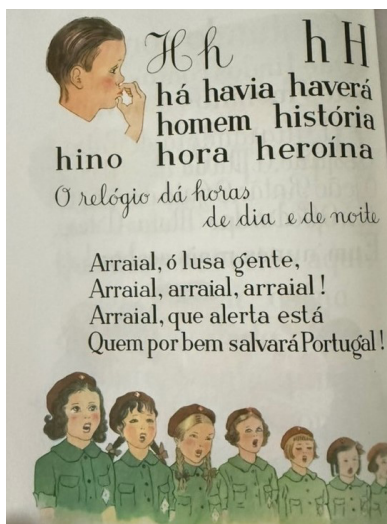


Figure 8. Song and Youth

Source. Taken from *Livro da Primeira Classe* (First Grade Textbook; 6th edition) by Ministério da Educação Nacional (Ministry of National Education), 1954, p.48. Photograph by Josué Duarte.

Note. Translation: "H / há (there is), havia (there was), haverá (there will be), homem (man), história (history/story), hino (anthem), hora (hour), heroína (heroine) / The clock tells the time, day and night.

Assembly, O Lusitanian people, / Assembly, assembly, assembly! / Assembly — alert is the one who will rightly save Portugal!"

Figure 9 depicts a group of children performing a salute reminiscent of a gesture of obedience or loyalty, similar to the Nazi salute. Although the specific context of the salute is not explained, its presence in the school textbook suggests the promotion of attitudes of respect for authority and conformity with the symbols of the regime.

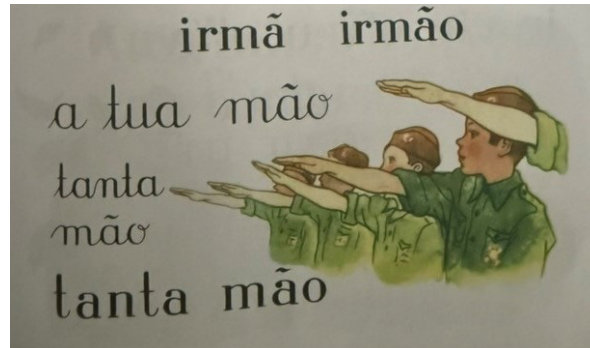


Figure 9. Sister brother

Source. Taken from Livro da Primeira Classe (First Grade Textbook; 6th edition) by Ministério da Educação Nacional (Ministry of National Education), 1954, p.21. Photograph by Josué Duarte.

Note. Translation: "Sister, brother / your hand / so many hands / so many hands".

In the next section, we will further discuss the implications of this content and its relevance for understanding the relationship between education and power in the context of the *Estado Novo*.

5. DISCUSSION

An analysis of school textbooks from the *Estado Novo* reveals the presence of cultural representations and ideological messages that sought to shape children's minds in accordance with the values and principles of the regime.

With regard to Catholicism and moral discipline, the results of the analysis reveal the profound influence of Catholic values on primary education at the time. Religious iconography and Christian teachings were used systematically to promote obedience, discipline and traditional family roles. This finding corroborates the studies by Mineiro (2007) and Serra (2005), which highlight the strong link between the regime and the Catholic Church and the latter's role in the ideological legitimisation of the *Estado Novo*. An analysis of Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3 shows how religious iconography was used to convey moral and doctrinal messages. The representation of figures such as the Immaculate Mary and scenes such as christening reinforced the values of reverence, faith and purity while instilling attitudes of respect for religious authority. This use of iconography to shape students' perceptions is in line with Hall's (1992/2006) perspective on the role of cultural representations in the construction and maintenance of dominant ideologies. The integration of Catholic values into the school curriculum was not limited to the transmission of religious content but also aimed to shape established social norms. This educational approach reflected the *Estado Novo*'s vision of a hierarchical and orderly society in which the Catholic Church played a fundamental role in maintaining social stability and transmitting traditional values.

With regard to patriarchal gender roles, an analysis of school textbooks reveals the strong presence of representations that reinforce traditional gender roles, confining women to the domestic sphere and the roles of mother and housewife. This finding is in line with Basto's (2015) research, which demonstrates how *Estado Novo*'s educational materials were carefully designed to perpetuate the patriarchal values defended by the regime. Figure 3, Figure 4 and Figure 5 clearly illustrate stereotypical representations of gender roles. The figure of the "housewife" and the representation of "Joaninha" emphasise the importance of women's role in the home, associating women with motherhood and domestic tasks. An analysis of Figure 3 also reveals how these ideas were instilled in girls from an early age. This social construction of gender roles in school textbooks contributed to limiting women's opportunities in society and perpetuating their subordination to men. The idealisation of the family as the fundamental unit of social harmony, based on traditional gender roles, served to legitimise the authoritarian structure of the *Estado Novo*. By instilling a clear moral hierarchy within families, school textbooks sought to mirror the regime's power structure, promoting obedience and conformity as essential values for social stability.

With regard to obedience, an analysis of school textbooks reveals the systematic use of propaganda to foster loyalty to the regime and obedience to authority. The figure of António de Oliveira Salazar was consistently presented as a paternal and providential character whose wisdom and guidance guaranteed the well-being of the nation. This representation of Salazar as a benevolent leader and saviour of the homeland is explored in detail by Rosas (2013). The images and texts analysed reveal how propaganda manifests itself in various ways in school textbooks. Moralising historical narratives, such as the "example of loyalty", and symbolic elements that appealed to patriotism, such as songs and representations of children from the *Mocidade Portuguesa* singing, were used to instil in pupils the values that reinforced the authority of the regime and discouraged critical thinking. This strategy of ideological control extended beyond textual content to include visual and musical aspects in a comprehensive approach that sought to shape children's thinking and feelings about the country's social and political organisation. The discouragement of critical thinking and the promotion of obedience as a fundamental virtue reflected the authoritarian nature of the regime. By excluding alternative perspectives and presenting a single official narrative, the *Estado Novo* sought to ensure ideological conformity and unquestioning loyalty to the regime.

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study, which adopted a qualitative approach based on documentary analysis, examined the intricate relationship between education and ideology in the context of the *Estado Novo* regime in Portugal (1933–1974). The results of the analysis of primary school textbooks reveal how education was used as a mechanism to standardise content, with the introduction of the "single textbook" aimed at ensuring alignment with the regime's values, such as nationalism, Catholic morality and obedience.

The curriculum prioritised subjects such as history and moral education to glorify Portugal's colonial past, promote loyalty to the regime and discourage critical thinking. Teachers played a central role as agents of ideological dissemination, being monitored and controlled to ensure compliance with strict codes of conduct. As examples of morality and transmitters of the values approved by the regime, educators were instrumental in shaping the ideological orientation of younger generations.

An analysis of the iconography present in school textbooks shows how visual representations were used to convey ideological messages in a subtle but powerful way. Nationalist and religious images reinforced the glorification of national heroes, the colonial mission and the leadership of António de Oliveira Salazar while omitting dissenting or critical perspectives.

Education was also used to reinforce traditional gender roles, training girls for domesticity and boys for leadership roles or professions linked to manual labour, depending on their social class. This stratification of gender and socio-economic status perpetuated existing inequalities, limiting social mobility and reinforcing the hierarchical social order defended by the regime.

The sociocultural effects of this system were profound, consolidating the regime's ideology in the collective consciousness of successive generations. By cultivating a citizenry aligned with authoritarian values, the *Estado Novo* ensured its ideological hegemony. However, the prioritisation of conformity over critical education contributed to Portugal's intellectual and economic stagnation, leaving the country ill-prepared to face the challenges of modernisation.

These conclusions underscore the powerful role of cultural representations as ideological instruments. The *Estado Novo* exemplifies how authoritarian regimes can exploit education to impose cultural, political and social norms, ensuring conformity and suppressing dissent. School textbooks and curricula, often perceived as neutral, prove to be powerful tools for promoting the dominant political and cultural agenda. The relationship between teachers and the State during this period highlights how professional autonomy can be restricted to serve the regime's objectives, which in many cases resulted in educators acting as propagandists and agents of ideological imposition, counteracting the actions of others who resisted.

The long-term cultural impacts of such systems are significant, as ideologically oriented education leaves deep marks on national identity, shaping values, beliefs, and social roles. This case highlights the lasting influence of educational policies on social structures and raises important questions about the role of education in modern societies.

The conclusions emphasise the need to foster critical thinking and inclusion in education in order to prevent the entrenchment of biased or authoritarian ideologies. Ultimately, this study reveals that education is not only a mechanism for the transmission of knowledge but also a powerful tool for shaping cultural narratives and power dynamics, requiring vigilance in its design and implementation.

Machine Translation Post-Editin: Anabela Delgado

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