

Private education in Argentina and Brazil^{1*}

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Abstract

Exploring the concept of segmentation, this article demonstrates how the expansion of the Argentinian and Brazilian school systems has been associated to processes of school differentiation that have contributed to the production and reproduction of educational inequalities. Based on the analysis of historical statistics on literacy and school enrollment as well as of documents that register the school transformations since the end of the 1800s, the article shows, first, that in both school systems, segmentation processes were and are based on the separation between public and private education rather than on differentiation of public schools curriculum. It shows also that while this type of segmentation is quite recent in Argentina, it is an old feature of the Brazilian school system. Finally, the article documents a progressive convergence between the two systems, as the private schools still offer a reserved space for the schooling of the Brazilian privileged groups and has increasingly played this role in Argentina in the last decades.

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A educação privada na Argentina e no Brasil

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Resumo

Explorando o conceito de segmentação, este artigo procura demonstrar como a expansão dos sistemas de ensino argentino e brasileiro se articula a processos de diferenciação da oferta escolar que contribuem para a produção e a reprodução das desigualdades educacionais. Partindo da análise de estatísticas históricas sobre a variação da alfabetização e das matrículas desde o final do século XIX e de documentos que registram as transformações na organização dos sistemas de ensino, o artigo mostra, em primeiro lugar, que, em ambos os sistemas, processos de segmentação se apoiaram e ainda se apoiam mais amplamente na clivagem entre educação pública e privada do que na diferenciação do currículo da escola pública. Além disso, mostra que essa clivagem é bastante recente na Argentina e muito antiga no Brasil, onde antecedeu a própria constituição do sistema nacional de ensino. Finalmente, em terceiro lugar, o artigo registra uma tendência de convergência entre os dois sistemas, já que a educação privada continua a garantir um espaço reservado para a escolarização dos grupos mais privilegiados no Brasil e desempenha com cada vez maior força esse papel na Argentina.

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Palavras chave

Segmentação do sistema de ensino – Educação privada e educação pública – Desigualdades educacionais.

Introduction

We have known, for almost half a century now, that educational inequalities are closely associated with students' socioeconomic characteristics (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 1970; BAUDELLOT; ESTABLET, 1972; BOWLES; GINTIS, 1976), as well as their race (HASENBALG; SILVA, 1999, 2003; SOARES; ALVES, 2003), and gender (CARVALHO, 2003). This indicates that the educational systems are, on one hand, sensible to the cleavages that organize the social relations in their societies and, on the other, that they can be thought of as "intermediaries more or less meaningful between the social position of parents and their children." (RINGER, 1979, p. 12).

Findings as these have led an increasing number of scholars to focus on identifying, describing, and explaining the social and institutional dynamics that make the educational system so permeable to the more general principles of social organization, leading to an active area of studies marked, in general, by the empirical dimension of the issues pursued by researchers, normally guided by an interest to contribute to public policies (BUCHMANN, 2011). This helps to explain why so many works have focused, throughout the 20th century, on specific countries and, as pointed out by Buchmann (2011), most commonly the one where both researchers and the reader are immersed.

By contrast, the comparative study here proposed, which examines the social place of private school in Argentina and Brazil, follows a quite different tradition. It aims, on one hand, to enter into dialogue with the intellectual production that has been pointing out, since at least the 1970s, the global character of schooling expansion since the 19th century and its relationship with the processes of building and consolidation of national educational systems (ARCHER, 1982; MÜLLER; RINGER; SIMON, 1989; RAMIREZ; BOLI, 1987). On the other, it investigates how this expansion relates to the processes of differentiation in school offer which

contribute to the production and reproduction of educational inequalities (RINGER, 1979). In this perspective, the comparative approach can contribute to establish the level of specificity of the phenomena, to refine explanations of typical phenomena in certain national contexts, and also to go forward on the understanding of how transnational dynamics can have strong national consequences.

Thus, this text uses a comparative perspective to explore the weight of institutional arrangements to canalize resources and define expectations and strategies which, combined, will lead to the production and maintenance of educational inequalities (MÜLLER; RINGER; SIMON, 1989; LUCAS, 1999; BRASLAVSKY, 1980; TIRAMONTI, 1995). Particularly, the text examines the role played in these processes by the educational system internal differentiation.

This is not a new problem. Several studies have shown that the processes that led to the emergence and consolidation of educational national systems, be it in Western Europe and in North America from the end of the 18th century and during the 19th century, or in other parts of the world throughout the 20th century, were marked by disputes that resulted in types of school organization characterized, among other things, by the isolation of the privileged groups school experiences from the ones reserved to the population in general (RINGER, 1979). Surely, such isolation resulted in a series of advantages for these groups, for instance, the accumulation of pedagogical resources to support successful school trajectories, as it happens when one assembles students from rich or highly-educated backgrounds in the same environment (KARABEL, 2006; LAREAU, 1989), the creation of social networks which can be useful to enter the job market (SENDÓN, 2013; GESSAGHI, 2016) and the marriage market (PINÇON; PINÇON-CHARLOT, 2002), among others.

These studies document that, in the early stages of school expansion, the isolation of school experience of the privileged ones tended to be done by the mechanism of preventing

certain levels of education from being accessed by the largest part of the population. Such mechanism was not necessarily imposed by laws and regulations, but, in general, was the result of obstacles faced by working-class children and certain less-privileged fractions of the middle classes to reach higher level of schooling, be it for the lack of school, or the lack of material and/or pedagogical support in the schools.

The simple fact that the secondary education had advanced in a slower rhythm than the primary one contributed to nurture this situation, implying a relative closure of the first to the social classes that succeeded in finishing the second. In Western Europe and in the United States, this situation tended to alter only when secondary school came close to universalization.

Nevertheless, even though it allowed the progressive entrance of all in the more advanced levels of formation, the primary school universalization was followed by measures that created an internal differentiation in the secondary level system. From that point, the isolation of the school experience of the privileged groups was guaranteed by the association between specific paths that associate, at the same time, particular types of curricula and students' social origins. The result was the production of a structure of stratified educational opportunities depending on the social position of families.

Until nowadays, the internal differentiation of the education system continues to play an important role on the production of educational inequalities in different national contexts, as shown by recent studies on segmentation and tracking (LUCAS; BERENDS, 2007). Argentina and Brazil are no exceptions, as different studies have already shown (TEDESCO, 1986; ZIEGLER, 2004; ALMEIDA, 2015; PEROSA, 2009).

The schooling reserved to students from privileged backgrounds can be located within the public sector, as in France, for example,

with the creation of a dual system described by Baudelot and Establet (1972), as well as in Germany (DEPPE; KRÜGER, 2015) and in Argentina through most part of the 20th century (TEDESCO, 1986; DUSSEL; PINEAU, 1995), or in the private sector, as happened quite early in other countries such as in Brazil (HAIDAR, 2008).

As we will see, each of the countries analyzed here had gone through different processes of expansion and differentiation. In the case of Argentina, we observe an early expansion, based on an institutional format characterized by the predominant role of public school, more specifically, the state school, to use the vocabulary of this system. In the case of Brazil, conversely, the late expansion came to fruition in a segmented system, in which the schooling of the more privileged groups was mainly done in the private sector, with little participation of the public one (PEROSA, 2010).

To begin with, maybe it is important to highlight that one of the difficulties in the type of analysis proposed here comes from the relative incompatibility of available data. The construction of historic series is complicated by differences of periodization, which prevent the synchronization of information, as well as by differences in the way the national school systems are organized that go beyond nomenclature. For instance, what one system calls "primary school" corresponds only partially to what is called "fundamental school" in the other. Besides this, the names given to educational stages or grades changed during the period analyzed here. To allow readers to better understand the argument developed in the text, we opted to present separately the data relative to each country and to refer to "elementary school" when referring either to the Argentinian "primary school" or to the Brazilian "fundamental school", after clarifying to what it refers in each period. We will see that, regardless these difficulties, it is possible to create an intelligible and, we hope, convincing comparative analysis.

Expansion of schooling in a comparative perspective

Different starting points and rhythms have marked Argentinean and Brazilian school expansion. As in several Western European and North American countries, the organization of the school offer in a system, which encompasses the national territory, has followed in both countries the processes of power concentration that accompanied the creation of National States. Progressively, it gave rise to the establishment of a central bureaucracy, the secularization of the political sphere, the unification of an internal market, and the creation of education national systems in charge of forming citizens able to participate in this new social arrangement.

In Argentina, as well as in Uruguay and Chile, the processes of creating national education systems took place in the 19th century, much earlier than in other countries of Latin America. Besides, the universalization of schooling was achieved much faster in these countries when compared to other experiences in the region. In Brazil, for instance, the national systematization of schooling only started in the 1930s, consolidating only in the 1960s. Before this, the systematization progressed mainly in the state level, following asymmetric processes of school expansion, resulting in a strong regional inequality. The universalization was reached only in the end of the 20th century.

Therefore, even though the expansion of schooling in Argentina and Brazil was continuous during the period analyzed, resulting in the progressive incorporation of different social groups fractions, we see a distinct asymmetry regarding the starting points and rhythms of both countries. In Argentina, we observe a meaningful expansion in primary school- children between 6 and 12 years old-between the end of the 19th century and mid-20th, under a centralized model in which the federal government took the lead in the promotion of schooling in the whole country.

The first law of Education, Law 1.420 (1884), as well as the Law Lainez (1905), promoted the creation, by the central government, of public free laic primary school with compulsory attendance in all territory (TEDESCO, 1986; BRASLAVSKY; KRAWCZYK, 1988).

In Brazil, even though the first general law regarding elementary education was passed in 1827 (FARIA FILHO, 2000), right after independence, recommending the creation of “schools to teach the first letters in every city, village, and the more populated places of the Empire”¹, the first primary schools organized in a system appeared under the responsibility of the states only in the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century (SOUZA, 1998).

Such difference has important effects. It allows us to understand why illiteracy became residual in Argentina in the 1940s, when less than 15% of the population with more than 15 years declared themselves illiterate, as shown in Table 1, while in Brazil this happened only in 2000, as shown in Table 2.

Table 1 – Argentina – Evolution of the proportion of illiterate people in the population of 15-year- old or more.

Year	Proportion of illiterate people (%)
1869	78,2
1895	54,4
1914	37,9
1947	13,6
1960	8,5
1970	7,4
1980	5,8
1991	3,7
2001	2,6
2010	1,9

Source: based on data presented by Rivas, Vera, and Bezem (2010) and the Censo Nacional de Población Hogares y Viviendas (INDEC, 2010).

1- Imperial law from October, 15th, 1827.

Table 2 – Brazil – Evolution of the proportion of illiterate people in the population of 15- year-old or more.

Year	Proportion of illiterate people (%)
1900	65.3
1920	65.0
1940	54.5
1960	39.7
1970	33.6
1980	25.4
1991	20.1
2000	13.6
2010	9.6
2013	8.5

Source: Historical Series and Synthesis of Social Indicators (IBGE).

The same difference in rhythm has marked the expansion of schooling in both countries. In Argentina, as shown on table 3, the enrollment rates in the elementary school, for children ranging from 6 to 12 years old, surpassed 85% in 1960. In Brazil, as shown on table 4, the enrollment in elementary school, for children between 7 and 14 years old, reached 83% only in 1993, more than 30 years later². Furthermore, Argentina reached a rate of 90% of enrollment in elementary school in 1980, approximately 20 years earlier than Brazil. The latter reached the same rate only in 1998.

It is also important to note that, in the Brazilian case, most children and youngsters enrolled in elementary school were in fact, enrolled in the first four grades that correspond to the former primary school. To reach the last four grades was a great was quite an obstacle to the less privileged groups during most 20th century (RIBEIRO, 1991). In

2- Until 2006, elementary school in Brazil attended children from 7 to 14 years old. From that year on, it started to be the period between the 1st and 9th year, attending children from 6 to 14. In Argentina, primary school corresponds to the level of children aged from 6 to 12.

the 2000s, this obstacle was moved to the end of secondary school.

Table 3 – Argentina – Evolution of enrollment rate in elementary education (1869-2010).

Year	Enrollment rate in primary education (%)
1869	20.0
1895	31.0
1914	48.0
1947	73.5
1960	85.6
1970	87.7
1980	90.1
1991	95.7
2001	97.9
2010	98.9

Source: based on data presented by Rivas, Vera, and Bezem (2010) and Censo Nacional de Población Hogares y Viviendas (INDEC, 2010).

Table 4 – Brazil – Evolution of enrollment rate in elementary school (1970-2013).*

Year	Enrollment rate in elementary school (%)
1970	67,0
1980	80,0
1992	81,4
1993	83,0
1998	91,0
2001	93,4
2003	94,0
2008	94,9
2011	95,6
2013	96,1

* We could not find the enrollment rates to the period before 1970. Source: Durham (1999) for data referring to the period between 1970 and 1980; the other data was found in IETS/OPE Sociais, based on the Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios (PNAD).

Something similar happened in both countries regarding the secondary education, normally attended by teenagers from 13 to 17 years in Argentina and 15 to 17 in Brazil. As shown on table 5, the rate of enrollment in this educational level in Argentina reached almost 60% in the beginning of the 90s, surpassing 80% in 2010. While in Brazil, as shown on table 6, the rate was still under 60% in 2014, last year for which data is available.

Table 5 – Argentina – Evolution of enrollment rates in secondary school (1970-2010).

Year	Enrollment Rates In Secondary School (%)
1970	32,8
1980	42,2
1991	59,3
2001	71,5
2010	82,2

Source: based data presented by Rivas Vera and Bezem (2010) and the Censo Nacional de Población Hogares y Viviendas (INDEC, 2010).

Table 6 – Brazil – Evolution of enrollment rates in secondary school (1980-2014).

Year	Enrollment rates in high school (%)
1980	14,3
1992	18,3
1993	19,0
1998	30,0
2001	37,5
2003	43,4
2006	47,3
2008	50,6
2011	51,8
2013	55,3
2014	56,5

Source: for 1980, Censo Demográfico (IBGE); for the other years: IETS/OPE Sociais, based on Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios (PNAD).

The data presented above show the significant differences in the rhythm of school expansion in both countries. The more general data on all levels of education in a more recent period, presented on tables 7 and 8, indicate the similarities and differences between the two countries.

Table 7 – Argentina – Enrollment rate by age group (2001 e 2010).

	2001	2010	Increase
0-3 years	--	--	--
3-5 years	52,9	67,5	14,6
6-11 years	98,2	99,0	0,8
12-17 years	87,4	89,0	1,6
18-24 years	36,9	36,4	-0,5

Source: Censo Nacional de Población Hogares y Viviendas (INDEC, 2001/2010).

Tabela 8 – Brazil – Enrollment rate by age group (2001 e 2014).

	2001	2014	Increase
0-3 years	13,8	29,6	15,8
4-5/6 years	66,4	89,1	22,7
6/7-14 years	94,6	97,5	2,9
15-17 years	77,7	82,6	4,9
18-24 years	34,0	30,0	-4,0

Sources: for 2001, age groups 0 to 17 years old, Todos pela Educação (2014); age groups from 18 to 24 years old, Castro (2009). For 2014, Síntese de Indicadores Sociais (IBGE). All indicators based on PNAD data (IBGE).

As we can see, the vertical segmentation, meaning the differential access to higher levels of education among social groups, was never fully resolved, especially in Brazil. Adding to that, its effect was reinforced by processes of curricula differentiation associated with social origin, that is, by a horizontal segmentation that we will discuss in the next section.

Private education and the segmentation of educational systems in Argentina and Brazil

The horizontal segmentation of Brazilian and Argentinian educational system derives

from complex historical processes. In Argentina, it was initially a result from transformations within the public system itself to which the opposition between private and public systems was more recently added. In Brazil, differently, the horizontal segmentation has been strongly associated with the weight of the private education since the creation of the national educational system.

In Argentina, the enrollment in private school in the primary level was lower than 8,8% between 1930 and 1960, while in the secondary level it was almost inexistent until the mid-40s. In 1960, in a period that coincides with the initial expansion of this level of education, the enrollment rate reached 10,4% and began to expand from there.

The increasing interest for private school grew in parallel to the expansion of public secondary education that, in turn, was followed by an increase in the internal differentiation of this educational level, resulting from the creation of a circuit of vocational education, through which part of low-income families were incorporated into higher levels of education (DUSSEL; PINEAU, 1995). Generalist education, which prepares for higher education, was reserved to the more privileged groups. During most of the 20th century, private education did not play an important role in the schooling of dominant groups. This happened only more recently, as we will discuss later on.

In Brazil, the most significant horizontal segmentation during the 20th century and still important nowadays opposes private and public schools. It preceded the creation of a national educational system, which gained power in the 1930s and 40s, and was still in place during the system consolidation phase that lasted approximately until the 1980s. During this period, most enrollments in the secondary level were in the private sector. In 1956, for instance, when estimates show that only 6% of the population between 12 and 18 years old were enrolled in what was considered

the secondary education at the time- the last four years of the current elementary school and the three years of high school- only 26,8% of students were enrolled in public schools (ABREU, 2005).

Thus, summing up, we have two different situations. On one hand, in the case of Argentina, we see an early expansion of secondary school, following the expansion of primary school and a formal horizontal segmentation within the public sector, associating different branches of education to the social origins of enrolled students. On the other hand, in the Brazilian case, we observe a modest expansion of the secondary school during the 20th century, simultaneously to an early informal horizontal segmentation between public and private sectors, which the establishment of a national educational system could not resolve.

This difference between the two systems tends to be reduced lately mainly because in Argentina there has been an expansion of enrollments in private schools, in all levels. Such expansion has many reasons. In the initial level of schooling, corresponding to preschool, private schools fill a void that the state has not been able to fulfill (VATIUK, 2010). In primary and secondary levels, the increase of private schools arises, mainly, from the perception of certain social groups that there is a process of deterioration of public schools (NARODOWSKI; MOSCHETTI, 2015). Finally, in the higher education, there has been an increase in the non-university private sector, mainly in the vocational sector, which serves as an entrance door to the job market for certain fractions of middle and low- income groups.

As a result, even though there has been an increase in the enrollments in both sectors of the educational system, public and private, between the 1990s and 2010s, the rate is higher in the private sector, which grew 31% in the period versus 18% in the state sector, as shown on table 9.

Table 9 – Argentina – Enrollments in secondary education by educational system sector and year

Educational system sector	Enrollments per year (%)										Variation (%) 1996-2014*
	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	
State	73,6	72,9	72,8	72,8	72,3	72,0	71,8	72,2	71,7	71,5	18,1
Private	26,4	27,1	27,2	27,2	27,7	28,0	28,2	27,8	28,3	28,5	31,0

Source: 1996 to 2014, historic series DINIECE, Ministerio de Educación de la Nación³

3- Due to the changes that took place in the education system, the data presented on this table regarding 1996, 1997, and 1998 refer to the enrollment in the last year of primary school added to the enrollment in the secondary level, including vocational schools.

In Brazil, private school began to be seen, from the 1970s on, as an alternative to those groups that, having already reached secondary education, saw this level been expanded and, therefore, losing its exclusivity. Thus, private schools, the traditional enclave of more privileged groups, became also the destiny of children from different fractions of the middle-classes. This tendency can be understood also as a consequence of insufficient investments in public education to support its expansion, which led to a lack of infrastructure and teachers to supply the demands of an increasingly high enrollment. However, despite the growth in the flow of students from middle classes to private secondary schools, most enrollments were still in the secondary public schools due to its strong expansion.

In the Brazilian case, the participation of private schools in secondary education was very significant in the period between the beginning of the 20th century and the 1980s. As can be seen on table 10, until the end of the 1980s, private schools were still responsible for a third of enrollments in secondary school. From the 1980s on, the rapid expansion of public schools have eventually altered the state of things. The incorporation of new contingents was done mainly in the public sector. As a result, the proportion of enrollments in private schools has decreased, reaching the lowest level in 2007, when it received 10,7% of all enrollments in this educational level, with a small increase after that.

Table 10 – Brazil – Enrollments in secondary school per educational sector and year.

Education sector	Enrollments and year (%)										
	1970	1980	1989	1995	2000	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015
Public	-	56,8	69,6	78,3	85,9	87,7	89,3	88,2	87,8	87,2	86,6
Private	-	43,2	30,4	21,7	14,1	12,3	10,7	11,8	12,2	12,8	13,4

Source: For 1980 to 1989, Historic Series (IBGE); and for 1995 to 2015 Sinopses Estatísticas (INEP).

The analysis of enrollments considering the income of families allows us to understand this point. In the case

of Brazil, the table 11 shows that private schools receive students from families with a higher average income.

Table 11 – Brazil – Population enrolled in school per level, educational system sector, according to per capita family income quintile in 2007 and 2014 (%).

Level	Income quintile	1		2		3		4		5		Variation % private	
	Years	2007	2014	2007	2014	2007	2014	2007	2014	2007	2014	q1	q5
	Income*	R\$76	R\$186	R\$179	R\$408	R\$307	R\$652	R\$503	R\$1009	R\$1.569	R\$2.903		
Preschool	Public	91	93	79	89	69	82	50	73	19	42		
	Private	9	7	21	11	31	18	50	27	81	58	-2	-23
School Elementary	Public	98	98	94	96	89	93	72	87	36	58		
	Private	2	2	6	4	11	7	28	13	64	42	0	-22
High school	Public	98	98	96	97	92	96	79	91	45	71		
	Private	2	2	4	3	8	4	21	9	55	29	0	-26
Higher education	Public	41	45	36	38	25	29	21	25	20	21		
	Private	59	55	64	62	75	71	79	75	80	79	-4	-1

(*) Average per capita family income. Minimum wage: R\$ 380,00 in 2007; R\$ 724,00 in 2014.

Dollar (commercial/sale): R\$1,88 on 16/07/2007 and R\$2,20 on 16/07/2014 (<http://www.portalbrasil.net.htm>).

Source: created by the authors based on data from Pnad 2007 and 2014 (IBGE).

As can be seen here, in all educational levels, the relation between family income and the educational sector in which the children and youngsters are enrolled is clear: students with lower family income are predominantly in public schools. Private schools become more predominant only in the fifth quintile of income. Besides this, enrollment in public schools increases in all income quintiles between 2007 and 2014, except in the first quintile of elementary and secondary education, in which its importance continues the same.

We can notice that the situation is very

different in higher education. In all income levels the higher enrollment is predominantly in private institutions. However, it is noteworthy that, in 2014, there was a slight decrease in the participation of the private sector in all quintiles of family income, even if it is still the majority, a change that results from the expansion of public higher education.

In Argentina, private schools receive systematically a higher proportion of students from more privileged families in all levels but in the university type of higher education, as shown on table 12.

Table 12 – Argentina – Population enrolled in school per level, educational system sector, according to per capita family income quintile in 2007 and 2014 (%).

Level	Quintile	1		2		3		4		5		Variation % private			
		Year Income*		2007	2014	2007	2014	2007	2014	2007	2014	2007	2014	q1	q5
		\$155	\$1008	\$349	\$2157	\$547	\$3308	R\$862	\$5020	\$1917	\$10771				
Initial education	State	86	89	67	66	53	49	31	37	20	24				
	Private	14	11	33	34	47	51	69	63	80	76	-3	-4		
Primary education	State	89	88	70	71	56	53	37	38	34	24				
	Private	11	12	30	29	44	47	63	62	66	76	1	10		
Secondary education	State	90	89	79	80	60	66	47	56	31	38				
	Private	10	11	21	20	40	34	53	44	69	62	1	-7		
Higher education	State	80	86	82	88	76	78	72	74	60	71				
	Private	20	14	18	12	24	22	28	26	40	29	-6	-11		
Non-university higher education	State	68	77	67	83	55	62	60	65	33	54				
	Private	32	23	33	17	45	38	40	35	67	46	-9	-21		
University higher education	State	86	91	86	90	83	84	75	76	66	76				
	Private	14	9	14	10	17	16	25	24	34	24	-5	-10		

(*)Average per capita family income in Argentinean pesos. Minimum wage in Argentinean pesos: \$ 900,00 in 2007; \$ 4.400,00 in 2014. Dollar: \$ 3,10 on 16/07/2007 and \$ 8,15 on 16/07/2014 (<https://es.investing.com/currencies/usd-ars-historical-data>).

Source: created by the authors based on data from Encuesta Permanente de Hogares 2007 e 2014.

The elementary level is quite similar to preschool in terms of the association between system sector and family income. The enrollments in public education are mainly in the first income quintiles (1, 2 and 3), while the enrollment in private education is concentrated in quintiles 4 and 5. In this level, we observe an increase of enrollment in the private sector in the order of 11% in the last quintile of income.

In the first quintiles, the enrollment is basically all directed to the state sector, while in the higher percentiles the enrollment in private education surpasses 50% in most cases. An important part of enrollments in the secondary level are in the private sector, but less intensely than in the initial and primary levels. They reach 62% in the last quintile in 2014, while they represent 76% in primary education also in the last quintile. Furthermore, we observe a

decrease of the enrollments in the private sector in all quintiles, except the first one, in which there is a small increase. This indicates the occurrence of a setback in private education in the higher quintiles, even though there is still a strong inequality of enrollments according to family income.

Contrasting with Brazil, these data indicate that, in the period studied, the proportion of enrollments in Argentinian private education grows in all educational levels according to the increase of family income. That said, we notice that the proportion of enrollments changes depending on the educational level. In preschool, primary, and secondary levels, the enrollments in private education surpass 50% of all enrollments in families that belong to higher income quintiles. In the different types of higher education listed above, most part of

the enrollments is in the state sector, except the fifth quintile regarding the “non-university higher education”, but only in 2001. Finally, also contrary to Brazil that presents a decrease in the demand for private secondary education in almost all levels and quintiles between 2007 and 2014, we observe in Argentina an increase of this demand in many quintiles.

The meaning of private schools

To understand the implications of these differences between the two systems provoked, on one hand, by the increase, in the total number of enrollments, of the participation of private schools in Argentina and, on the other hand, by the increase of the participation of public schools in Brazil, one needs to have in mind that when referring to private schools in one country and in the other we are dealing with different realities. In the Brazilian case, private education is the one offered by schools maintained by various organizations, that can be families, religious congregations, private foundations, among others. These schools can be a single establishment or be part of a series of schools distributed in different cities or states in the country. An example of the latter are the several conglomerates of schools maintained by religious congregations, but there are also many conglomerates maintained by laic organization and companies, even, more recently, those with open capital.

These schools have administrative autonomy, respecting the work laws of the country. During most of the 20th century, Brazilian private schools received contributions of different types of public resources. Nowadays, this is not possible anymore. With few exceptions, these schools today depend only on privately earned resources, generally from the tuition paid by students' parents, to maintain themselves and develop a lucrative operation, when it happens⁴.

4- However it is still in place a tax break favorable to the enrollment in private schools. In 2016, families could discount from their taxes an amount of R\$

Besides this, Brazilian private schools have total autonomy to define their managing staff, as well as recruiting teachers and students; however this is not followed by total pedagogical autonomy. Schools are submitted to guidelines that organize the national education system and have to respect the regulations of the states in which they are located. These regulations define the number of school days and school working hours, the organization of spaces, as well as the basic curriculum of the different levels of education, including the language used in class. Even though they guarantee certain homogeneity among schools, such regulations leave space to develop particular pedagogical styles, an important aspect to survive in the competitive field of Brazilian private education.

In the case of Argentina, there is a differentiation within the private system. On one hand, there is a type of private school that receives state money to pay teachers. Another part does not receive any state financing and thus, depends only on the resources obtained through tuition charged to the families in order to cover their costs and have a profit. These schools are more elitist and attend more privileged families than the others which receive financial contributions from the state and are, in its great majority, managed by catholic religious congregations.

We consider the separation of students between the public and private sectors in these two national systems as segmentation. We do so because students' social differentiation based on the school circuit they attend corresponds, at the same time, to a differentiation in the curriculum adopted by each school. In Argentina and in Brazil, the curricular difference derives, in most part of the system, from arrangements that are not legally formalized, as, in both cases, the state recognizes only a single and unified curriculum, defined by it, allowing just minor

3.561,50 of the total spent on tuition. This corresponds to 4 minimum wages. We thank Nora Krawczyk for calling our attention to this fact. Many families would probably continue to enroll their children in private schools despite this tax break, nonetheless, some maybe would not be able to afford it.

variations to fulfill the demands defined by the provinces, in the case of Argentina, or by the states, in the Brazilian case.

However, from this common structure, schools become differentiated in terms of their curriculum. In both countries, state schools have less autonomy than private schools to modify the prescribed curriculum. One of the reasons is financial restriction. The possibility to add contents beyond the minimum required - such as the offering of different foreign languages, art and sport practices as well as the deepening of certain areas of knowledge, etc. - depends on extra resources and is, for this reason, practically inexistent. Generally, activities that go beyond the official curriculum happen in state schools only when they get additional state funding, through special programs or, in rarer cases, by the voluntary contributions from families.

Moreover, in the Brazilian case, the public school sector deals with a chronic insufficiency of resources that threatens even possibility of developing the prescribed curriculum. For instance, there is a lack of teachers, an excessive number of students by class, lack of conditions to offer support for the students with low performance, among others. As a result, not even the prescribed curriculum is fully developed in a significant part of state schools.

In contrast, in both countries, private schools, even though they are supposed to adopt the same curriculum imposed by the State, have their own resources, which allow them to have a greater autonomy when defining the school work. They can adopt longer school days, propose a more intensive teaching load of certain academic areas, and develop athletic and artistic activities, as well as extracurricular activities. Furthermore, they can adopt their own pedagogical styles, leading to a certain specialization, as it happens with schools that offer experiences of self-development or focus on arts or sciences.

This difference among the schools curricula has its effects. In Argentina, studies done since the beginning of the 2000s have

been showing that the probability of learning the contents considered as adequate to each educational level is strongly associated to the type of school the student attends. As the access to different types of school is strongly associated to social origin, we find what Cervini (2003, 2004) and Cervini, Dari and Quiroz (2013) treat as sociocultural segmentation of the institutional frame, to indicate exactly the association between the types and levels of contents and students' social class.

Moreover, the social distinction derived from a schooling done in the private sector has effects beyond the school sphere, as the incentive to develop capacities and competences rare among the population- such as the mastery of foreign languages, the preparation to occupy leadership positions, as well as the creation of social networks can provide significant advantage in the work and marriage markets.

This situation is not different from Brazil. Besides the symbolic benefits, the schooling at a more privileged segment of the system offers significant school benefits. Teachers' answers in the questionnaire of the Sistema de Avaliação da Educação Básica- Saeb 2013 (Evaluation System of Basic Education) show that, in the second week of November, when it was applied, no high school teacher had developed more than 80% of the content expected for the respective grade. However, the percentage of those who had fulfilled this expectation from 60% to 80% was much higher in private schools (around 89%) than those in state schools (around 42%) and municipal ones (also approximately 42%). Besides that, in municipal and state schools, the proportion of high school teachers that could fulfill from 60% to 80% of the expected curriculum decreased in relation to the previous levels of education, while there is not much variation between federal and private schools. In the last years of elementary school, the difference between the teachers in private schools and those in municipal ones who taught more than the expected content was almost 50% .

These variations are associated to school performance. Around a quarter of students from municipal and state schools have a performance in Saeb considered below basic (23% and 26% respectively) and the majority has a basic performance (52% and 53%), what means that they do not have an adequate performance to their level .

Amongst the students of private schools, the majority has a performance considered adequate or advanced (59%). The difference compared with the percentage of students with an advanced performance is enormous- 18% in private schools, against 4% and 3% in state and municipal schools, respectively .

Faced by this scenario, we can better understand the reason why the attendance to private schools was, during the 20th century in Brazil, an important resource to access more prestigious higher education institutions, normally public ones, which have demanding entrance exams.

Final remarks

The segmentation of educational systems has been considered in the literature as an important mechanism of reproduction of educational inequalities. It is responsible for the differences in educational experiences of children and youngsters depending on their social origins. In this article, we compared the cases of Argentina and Brazil so as to explore this question.

As we had tried to show, the basic educational curriculum in both systems is, nowadays, officially the same. However, the curricular difference starts early and is strongly associated with the social origin of students. Instead of happening within the public school, as in most countries that have a national education system, the differentiation follows the cleavage between public and private schools and is not regulated by any legislation or official regulation, besides the one which gives space for curricula differentiation. It is,

nonetheless, effective in practice, even if based essentially on the differences in resources of each type of school.

To understand the broader meaning of this arrangement, it is important to keep in mind that the importance given to private schools in the division of the work to educate the new generations expresses the solutions given by each society to the two opposite tendencies that structure the struggles surrounding the educational system.

On one hand, there is a tendency of particularism, which consists on the tolerance or even stimulus to coexistence, in the same national state, of various school models that correspond, more or less closely, to the views on the socialization of younger generations, typical from specific groups or fractions of social groups. Private school finds, in this case, a fertile ground to its development.

On the other, there is the tendency towards school universalism. This universal school would result from disputes among social groups to impose their school model as universal. The presence of unique general regulations regarding the organization of schools, including the definition of curriculum and teacher formation, is a characteristic of systems that tend towards universalism. The universal school, in general state-run, tends to prosper in this environment.

In face of this opposition, clearly outlined for analytical effects, the empirical observation indicates that, independently from a stronger or weaker adherence to one of these models, a permanent state of tension between these opposite tendencies seems to be the rule rather than the exception, as shown by the struggles around such different issues, such as school financing, curriculum definition, teacher hiring and training, teaching organization, amongst others. This never-solved tension seem to be a central aspect of the organization of school experience, varying only its intensity, tributary of processes that are highly dependent on broader social dynamics that change through time.

The experience that led the universal, laic schools, managed and subsidized by the State, to the most prominent place in the school system, as seen in France, is not frequent. As argued by Oberti (2005, p. 6), the importance of private school was, through a good part of schooling history, associated “with the place occupied by religions and their relation to the State”. That is why variations in relation to the French model of a universal obligatory laic school are quite frequent (OBERTI, 2005). In the United States, for instance, obligatory school was implemented in the whole national territory without the need of a central administration (TYACK, 1974). In Italy, only recently school laicity became a widely accepted value (BARONE, 2005). There are many examples as these.

Thus, far from been thought as an anomaly, the tension between opposite tendencies of particularism and universalism, materialized, among others, in the opposition between private and public school, can be better understood if considered within an analytical framework that treats the

educational systems as spaces of constant struggle for increasing benefits associated with schooling (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 1970; BOURDIEU; BOLTANSKI, 1975). In this logic, to examine the social place occupied by the private school in different education systems in a certain moment can be a productive entry point to understand the particular state of the relation between the forces that boost these two tendencies in specific moments of history. It is a productive strategy to understand the effects of institutional arrangements that shape each education system on the production and reproduction of social inequalities.

To conclude, it is important to notice that this segmentation pattern between public and private, traditional in Brazil and increasing in Argentina, seems to be a world trend (MAXWELL; AGGLETON, 2015), which appears to indicate the need of more comparative studies that can contribute to deepen our understanding on the contemporary processes of social differentiation that have school as its base.

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