

## Academic elites in Education research

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### Abstract

The Brazilian system of graduate and research evaluation which is based on the production and qualification of faculty members and graduate programs alike have intensified competition and tensions in these fields. This paper presents analyses of the data of the scholarship holders belonging to levels 1 and senior scholars considering that they make up the academic elite. We aim to attempt to reconstruct the processes that structured and structure the academic field of Education which are derived from objective relations between peers, institutions and (material and symbolic) resources. The Lattes Curricula of CNPq Research Productivity Grantees (2016) in Education are the empirical reference for the construction of the database of this research on those academic elites. The design of those structures allowed us to develop some preliminary hypotheses about the capitalization of the resources which are necessary for the different positions in the institutional hierarchies that shape the field of force and power in the scope of research production in the area. Our data indicate that despite the expansion of graduate programs in Brazil and attempts to displace the centrality of the Southeast in research, both economic and scientific powers are still strongly anchored in the Southeastern and Southern regions of the country.

### Keywords

Scientific field – Education research – Institutional hierarchies – Productivity scholarship.

Publish or perish has become a constant threat in academic life encompassing researchers, students, area coordinators and institutional managers.

Two important French newspapers - *Le Monde* and *Le Temps* – conducted a survey on this issue that indicated some developments on the research published by scientific

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journals, with some important findings, namely: 1) knowledge confiscation; 2) peer-review flaws; 3) the “embellishment” of results; and 4) the impossibility to replicate results.<sup>3</sup> In other words, never have such scientifically irrelevant articles been published, even in the most important journals.

The scientific field is a space of competition for and/or maintenance of the best positions in each specific subfield (BOURDIEU, 1989b). But, on the other hand, the proliferation of indicators in the academic environment and the accounting of scores to manage the life of faculty members-researchers begun to drive a publishing rush that has clearly reflected on the quality of what is divulged.

The politics of representation in evaluation committees at government sponsor agencies at federal level (Capes, CNPq, INEP), state level (State Research Foundations such as Faperj and Fapesp) and at other research institutes and foundations (private and international ones) evidence the competitive struggle in the academic field and the importance of strategies to be represented in university power agencies.<sup>4</sup>

In this conjuncture, we are developing a research program about research productivity fellows (PQs) of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) in the area of education.<sup>5</sup> In this article, we examine the Lattes curricula of the researchers sponsored by these scholarships in order to achieve our goal, namely to identify the processes that have been structuring<sup>6</sup> the academic field of education and which derive from objective relationships between peers, institutions and resources<sup>7</sup> (both material and symbolic). Our empirical strategy involves tables with data frequency and cross-reference information by means of tabulation. Outlining these structures allows developing a few initial hypotheses about the size and types of capitalization of resources required by the different positions in the institutional hierarchies that characterize the field of forces and power in the context of research output in the area.

A first bibliographical survey within the scope of our study showed scarce research on the CNPq research productivity fellows in the area of education. We found studies with a bibliometric focus (WAINER; VIEIRA, 2013); studies focusing on sociology (VICTOR, 2014); about research productivity fellows from the perspective of gender and approaching all areas in humanities (GUEDES; AZEVEDO; FERREIRA, 2015); and other studies indicating a strong selectiveness by the selection and bonus system.<sup>8</sup> Specifically on the education area, we found a few recent studies that try to reveal the subjectivity in the productivity fellows

**3-** In this respect, see: [https://www.lemonde.fr/sciences/article/2017/09/26/publier-ou-perir-une-malediction-pour-la-recherche\\_5191761\\_1650684.html?xtmc=publier\\_ou\\_perir&xtcr=1](https://www.lemonde.fr/sciences/article/2017/09/26/publier-ou-perir-une-malediction-pour-la-recherche_5191761_1650684.html?xtmc=publier_ou_perir&xtcr=1). Accessed on Nov. 19, 2018.

**4-** Our main theoretical and empirical inspiration in the field of research has been the work of Pierre Bourdieu since we formed our group of studies and research in sociology of education (SOCED) in 1992.

**5-** Scholarships valid by July 2016.

**6-** In the Bourdieusian sense of the usually slow and tendentially conservative dynamics of the history of structures as he presented in two of his last works on the academic field, namely: *Homo Academicus* (BOURDIEU, 2011), originally published in 1984, and *La Noblesse d'État* (BOURDIEU, 1989a).

**7-** These relationships have historically guaranteed hierarchical profiles and structures where positions are occupied by agents, institutions, agencies that sponsor and legitimize the activities of academic research and the struggle for higher positions in the CNPq research productivity evaluation scales.

**8-** In the field of psychology, we found the study of Wendt and collaborators (2013); in the field of mathematics, Londero da Silva (2011); in the field of information sciences, Chaves Guimarães, Cabrini Gracio and Oliveira Matos (2014); in collective health, Barata and Goldbaum (2003), and one study about the correlation between major areas, of Wainer and Vieira (2013), in addition to the bibliometric analysis of Dias and collaborators (2016).

selection process. One of them presents an investigation about the academic profile and trajectory of researchers working in the teaching of science and mathematics (SILVA, 2011); another study examined the trajectories and publications of productivity fellows to analyze the relationship between output, communication and scientific distinction, revealing the large degree of subjectivity in the evaluation criteria used by CNPq for maintaining and granting scholarships (NASCIMENTO, 2016); we also found a recent descriptive study with a focus on gender, the country's regions and productivity fellows' projects in the education area (LEITE; ROCHA NETO, 2017).

## **The question of academic elites and the role of the state**

Working sociologically with the notion of elite so as to make it an object implies admitting that “every empirically observable society comprises one or more categories of people who consider themselves or are considered to be part of an elite, whether at the level of society taken as a whole or, on the contrary, in a particular field of activity” (COENEN-HUTHER, 2004, p. 10).

Although it is not our purpose to go deeper into the question, it is worth emphasizing that the treatment of the term elite as singular or plural has already been the subject of the classic Pareto, which used it in the singular to refer to the ruling elite and in the plural as a more general concept attributed to positions in various spheres of social life.<sup>9</sup> There has been also a gradual movement away from a monolithic view of ruling classes from the perspective of the Marxist orthodoxy of confrontation of the two fundamental classes. The perspective of positions – in specific, higher or lower spaces – produced different stratification scales and became clearly consensual in the theoretical field, despite the multiplication of theories specific to different areas of political or professional activity.

Indeed, the use and characterization of the word elite may differ between societies, assuming that some people have more power than others. Thus, it can designate a minority with prestige and privileges that arise from natural qualities/differentials traditionally valued by society or qualities acquired by merit and aptitudes. Coenen-Hunther (2004, p. 14) considers that speaking of elites in the plural means “to think of elites competing around the same goal or, to the contrary, of different elites that are specialist and active in different domains.”

Our study deals with specialist elites, such as the academic ones, which are always submitted to judgments by agents from their own field. When he indicates the ambiguities of the social notoriety that some individuals achieve, Bourdieu points to the possibility of influence by external fields on the construction of this social valuation, such as journalism, social networks, etc. Mundane success (i.e., not resulting from peer judgment) can often influence elites' social perception. In this respect, we have fields that are more or less restricted, and the more open to mundane social judgment, the smaller the elites' professional prestige tends to be. Guilds and the State's legitimizing power usually play a prominent role in attributing value to professional credentials, as

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**9-** In this respect, cf. Coenen-Huther (2004, p. 7)

with academic elites: “The State as a space of relations of force and meaning is the producer of classification principles susceptible of being applied to the social world [...] *and it possesses a formidable trump: making people believe what these principles say.*” (BOURDIEU, 2014, p. 24, emphasis added).

The last course taught by Bourdieu at the Collège de France analyzed in detail the genesis, characteristics and functions of the State, and emphasized at its very beginning the role and function of committees (committees, councils, etc.) as legitimate and legitimating representatives of official acts.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the appointment of members of government agencies’ committees is an important element in the constitution of institutional agents’ political capital, and it materializes through strategies of

[...] selection of selection committees and criteria of evaluation commissions, the social conditions of recruitment and the behavior of scientific managers, the social relations of domination that take place under the aegis of scientific authority relations, often hindering or impeding rather than liberating inventiveness and creativity, especially with the young, in national networks and, nowadays, in cooptation places that protect some from the rigors of scientific evaluation and prohibit others from fully expressing their creative possibilities. (BOURDIEU, 2013, p. 27).

The National Research Council (CNPq), created in 1951, represented an effort to create a nuclear policy in the country, later abandoned due to lack of political and economic viability. Resumed in 1975, the CNPq progressively joined the bureaucratic planning structure as a legal entity of private law in the form of a foundation linked to Seplan (Planning Secretariat), under the name of National Council for Scientific and Technological Development. Today, the CNPq is an agency of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MCTI) whose main attributions are to promote scientific and technological research and to foster the training of Brazilian researchers.

The creation of the CNPq, in the structure of the Ministry of Science and Technology, and the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes), linked to the Ministry of Education, provided some significant reinforcement to the regulation of and financial support for postgraduate programs and research activities by regulating and defining the resources to increase research in universities.

All output decisions and criteria (of researchers, institutions and graduate programs) require strategies that go beyond the applicants’ volume of scientific capital and connect to the field of power with a volume and set of capital (social, political, symbolic, legal, etc.) that differentially reinforces the acquisition of positions within the CNPq structure. Scientific authority is therefore a mix of visibility, technical competence and peer recognition mediated by the federal (CNPq and Capes)<sup>11</sup> and state (the State Research Foundations) official bodies.

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**10-** “It is the sociologist’s job to know how the commission was composed: who chose whom and why? Why ask so-and-so to be president? What property did he have/how was the coopting made? Wasn’t the game decided by the simple fact of deciding on its members? The commission is an organizational invention... putting people together in such a way that, being so organized, they will do things they wouldn’t if they weren’t organized that way” (BOURDIEU, 2014, p. 57).

**11-** Capes is a foundation linked to the Brazilian Ministry of Education and dedicated to expanding and consolidating graduate education in all states of the country.

## Structure and production of academic hierarchies

The empirical material examined so far has allowed us to formulate some hypotheses about the construction of strategies and the enhancement of capital structures that ensure (or ensured) PQs' prominent positions in the field of education. We seek to identify a set of universities – as agents – which prevail in these trajectories in order to define the relative weight of institutions in the struggle for academic and scientific hegemony in the field.

In 2016, CNPq's research productivity fellowships were awarded to 14,154 researchers in all areas, distributed in six fellowship levels: Senior, 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D and 2. These grants are awarded by 46 Advisory Committees (CAs) to researchers who stand out among their peers in order to foster their scientific output according to normative and specific criteria, comparative merit analysis and classification of proposals by CNPq specific Advisory Committees<sup>12</sup> (WAINER; VIEIRA, 2013).

The CNPq monitors researchers' performance through analysis of reports or other forms of monitoring defined according to each modality's features.<sup>13</sup> The classification, allocation and progression of a PQ fellow by category and level, as well as recommendations for level lowering and/or exclusion from the system, are attributions of each area's CA.<sup>14</sup> For each subarea and each level there is a fixed number of grants, except for level 2, thus reducing researchers' mobility to higher levels despite the increasing number of competitors derived from graduate expansion in the area.

To be a researcher in category 2, for which there is no level specification, the researcher must have completed his/her doctorate at least three years before the fellowship. Productivity for PQ 2 is evaluated with an emphasis on published papers and advisory provided in the five previous years, with no specific criteria other than comparative analysis. To be included in the PQ 1 category – the object of our study –, which is distributed in levels A, B, C and D, the researcher must have completed his/her doctorate at least eight years before the scholarship is implemented. In addition, there are specific rules for each level, however, all researchers in this category must: be linked to research groups registered in the CNPq Research Directory; present a project with scientific relevance to the area; show a regular scientific output in the ten previous years and have papers published in scientific journals rated A1, A2 and B1 by Qualis and/or books; regularly advise dissertations and, particularly, doctoral theses; participate in academic-scientific management entities internal or external to the institution he/she is linked to; coordinate projects that are central to different research groups in the country; and have an international academic presence.<sup>15</sup>

Being a CNPq productivity fellow at any level is enough to confer a differential of scientific capital in the academic environment. Levels represent the hierarchical gradation among researchers, a form of symbolic capital for distinction in the research field. We

**12-** CAs are organized by knowledge subareas. They comprise outstanding researchers in the subarea who are appointed by a CNPq deliberative council which selects members through consultations with scientific entities, the scientific community, among others. CA selection criteria are available at: <<http://cnpq.br/renovacao-de-cas>>. Accessed on Oct. 08, 2017.

**13-** For more information on these criteria, cf. Annex III of Ordinance RN-028/2015.

**14-** Productivity fellowship regulation available at: <<http://www.cnpq.br/documents/10157/5f43cefd-7a9a-4030-945e-4a0fa10a169a>>. Accessed on Sep. 24, 2016.

**15-** For more details on each productivity fellowship level in category 1 and on category 2: [http://cnpq.br/web/guest/view/-/journal\\_content/56\\_INSTANCE\\_0oED/10157/5966303](http://cnpq.br/web/guest/view/-/journal_content/56_INSTANCE_0oED/10157/5966303). Accessed on: Oct. 03, 2017.

consider, at this point, only PQ 1s and seniors, inferring that PQ 1 fellows' specific features can reveal a legitimate way of existing scientifically, i.e., of possessing something more according to the categories of peer perception in effect in the field, as pointed out by Bourdieu (2013).

The senior category is a distinction awarded to researchers at the top of the hierarchy who can prove to have had category 1 productivity grants at levels 1A and 1B for at least fifteen years, consecutive or not.

Level 1A, according to CNPq, is awarded to candidates who have demonstrated continued excellence in scientific output and in human resource training, and who lead consolidated research groups. To stay in this category, researchers are evaluated comparatively with their peers, based on data for at least the ten previous years, demonstrating capacity of continuous human resource training.

The research productivity grant at all levels has become more attractive in academia since the mid-1990's when public expenditure on science and technology (S&T) activities increased. If earlier the grants provided by CNPq were already

[...] an instrument of symbolic differentiation between peers, they have now become institutionalized as a hierarchical system of positions, representing a profile of excellence of what can be considered a scientific elite – that of research specialists and professionals who are recognized as leaders in S&T activities in the country, and who receive exclusive material and symbolic resources. (GUEDES et al., 2015, p. 369).

The research productivity grant is not only distributed based on the quality of a submitted project, but mainly on the researcher's quality defined by a distinction between quantitative-qualitative categories according to the profiles established by the Advisory Committee (CA) of the education area and the funds available in the area.<sup>16</sup> Nascimento (2016, p. 106) analyzed the academic trajectories of CNPq PQ1, PQ2, and PQ-Sr fellows in the area of education from 1990 to 2015 with regard to scientific output, and in the criteria for granting/evaluating fellowships she denounces "statements that are empty of objective meaning but full of relativized subjectivity". The author further states that "the words, signs, and statements that make up the criteria for granting research productivity fellowships are laden with interpretive subjectivities that do not reflect what actually distinguishes a PQ1 A from a PQ2" (NASCIMENTO, 2016, p. 108-9).

## **Research productivity fellows in education**

Considering that the scientific field is the dynamic web of objective positions and position-takings that constitute it as a space of competitive struggles – which are legitimized in the scientific field itself and dedicated to producing true propositions through mutual stimulation and reciprocal controls (WACQUANT, 2013) –, we aim to outline the academic hierarchies in the field of education through its agents, i.e., the researchers, since in our

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**16-** CA criteria for the education area are available at: <[http://cnpq.br/web/guest/view/-/journal\\_content/56\\_INSTANCE\\_0oED/10157/50453](http://cnpq.br/web/guest/view/-/journal_content/56_INSTANCE_0oED/10157/50453)>. Accessed on Oct. 08, 2017.

view, “a scientist is a scientific field made flesh, an agent whose cognitive structures are homologous with the structures of the field and, as a consequence, constantly adjusted to the expectations inscribed in the field” (BOURDIEU, 2005, p. 35).

In order to understand the universe of institutions and researchers in our analysis, we built a database from the Curriculum Lattes (CNPq) of researchers with a productivity grant (PQ) in the field of education that was valid in 2016,<sup>17</sup> considering its category and level.

**Table 1** – Number of CNPq research productivity fellows in the field of education

Categories		No. of fellows
	Senior	11 (2,8%)
1	A	30 (7,6%)
	B	25 (6,3%)
	C	34 (8,6%)
	D	81 (20,5%)
2		214 (54,2%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>395 (100%)</b>

Source: Database made by Soced from the result of CNPq's awarding of grants in 2016.

As can be seen in Table 1, 54% (214) of fellows were in category 2, the system's entry category, and only 10.1% (41) reached the highest levels – Senior and 1A – in the PQ hierarchy.

In our study, we initially examined data for these 41 fellows,<sup>18</sup> eleven of which were PQ-Sr and thirty were PQ-1A fellows, within a universe of 395 fellows. For this article we expanded the analysis to all PQ-1 (1A, 1B, 1C and 1D), with a total of 170 fellows, which added to the eleven PQ-Sr to form our current sample of 181 researchers.

Considering that productivity fellows form an elite group at the national level, the 46% that we analyze here represent the elite within that elite, a group that accumulates not only academic but also symbolic capital, which ensures a privileged position within the education field. The highest concentration of fellows is, respectively, in categories 2 (214) and 1D (81), which suggests that there is a certain selectivity in category and level changes.

We used the constructed empirical data to develop interpretations and hypotheses on the processes of capitalization of forces in the field of higher education; likewise, we used them to characterize the strategies and types of capital that ensure (or ensured) prominent positions in the scientific field of research in education. Our goal in this text was to outline a set of institutions that formed, admitted and institutionally support the most prominent researchers in the field according to CNPq criteria. Table 2 presents the number of PQ/CNPq fellows and their institutions.

**17-** We consulted the grants that were valid in 2016 by researcher category on the CNPq website, available at: <[http://plsql1.cnpq.br/divulg/RESULTADO\\_PQ\\_102003.curso](http://plsql1.cnpq.br/divulg/RESULTADO_PQ_102003.curso)>. Accessed on: April 2016.

**18-** Data in this exploratory study with Sr and 1A productivity fellows were published in the journal *Educação e Pesquisa* (USP-Printed) under the title *Operando com conceitos de Bourdieu: produtividade em pesquisa e hierarquias acadêmicas no campo da Educação* (COCK, et al., 2018).

**Table 2 – CNPq Research productivity fellows in education research by institution**

Institution	SR	1A	1B	1C	1D	TOTAL %
USP	2	5	3	7	5	22
UERJ	0	2	3	2	7	14
UFMG	1	5	2	1	5	14
Unesp	0	3	2	3	6	14
UFRGS	2	2	2	4	4f	14
UFSCar	2	2	1	3	4	12
UFRJ	1	2	2	1	3	9
Unicamp	0	0	1	4	3	8
Unisinos	0	2	1	1	3	7
PUC/SP	0	0	0	0	5	5
PUCRS	0	2	1	0	2	5
PUC-Rio	0	3	0	0	1	4
UFF	0	1	0	1	2	4
UFPR	0	1	1	0	2	4
UFSC	0	0	1	1	2	4
UFU	0	0	1	2	1	4
UFBA	0	0	2	0	1	3
UFC	1	0	0	0	2	3
UFRN	0	0	0	0	3	3
UnB	0	0	1	0	2	3
Unifesp	1	0	0	0	2	3
UEL	0	0	0	1	1	2
UFPB	0	0	0	0	2	2
UFPE	0	0	0	0	2	2
UEM	0	0	0	1	1	2
UFSM	0	0	0	0	2	2
FURG	0	0	0	1	0	1
PUC-Campinas	1	0	0	0	0	1
PUC-Goiás	0	0	0	0	1	1
UECE	0	0	1	0	0	1
UEPG	0	0	0	0	1	1
UFAL	0	0	0	0	1	1
UFES	0	0	0	0	1	1
UFJF	0	0	0	0	1	1
UFPA	0	0	0	0	1	1
UFPEL	0	0	0	0	1	1
UNEB	0	0	0	0	1	1
UTP/PR	0	0	0	1	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>181</b>

Source: Database made by Soced from the *Curriculum Lattes* of CNPq research productivity fellows in 2016.

Although we can see that 38 institutions have productivity fellows, we identified a concentration of more than half of this select group of PQ-Sr and PQ-1 researchers, 54.7%, in only seven institutions in the country (USP, UERJ, UFMG, Unesp, UFRGS, UFSCar, UFRJ), as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3** – Distribution of institutions with the greatest concentration of CNPq research productivity fellows

Institution	SR	1 <sup>a</sup>	1B	1C	1D	Total%
USP	2	5	3	7	5	22 (12,3%)
UERJ	0	2	3	2	7	14 (7,7%)
UFMG	1	5	2	1	5	14 (7,7%)
Unesp	0	3	2	3	6	14 (7,7%)
UFRGS	2	2	2	4	4	14 (7,7%)
UFSCar	2	2	1	3	4	12 (6,6%)
UFRJ	1	2	2	1	3	9(5%)
Partial Total	8	21	15	21	34	99 (54,7 %)
Other institutions*	3	9	10	13	47	82 (45,3%)
Total	11	30	25	34	81	181(100%)

Source: Database made by Soced from the *Curriculum Lattes* of CNPq research productivity fellows in 2016.

As can be seen in Table 3, the institutions with the greatest number of fellows are located in Brazil's Southeast and South regions, as a result of the accumulation of economic, social and political resources that traditionally characterize these institutions and regions.

When comparing data in Table 2, on senior and A1 productivity fellows and their institutional affiliation, we can see that these very seven institutions have at least two fellows in these categories, which indicates how the symbolic power of these institutions is representative in the construction of academic hierarchies.

Such a concentration allows inferring the power of research tradition and consolidation in these institutions, which are among the pioneers in the creation of graduate programs and the ANPEd,<sup>19</sup> hence their prominent place in the area of education research to this day.

Indeed, the schemas of perception and appreciation at the origin of our construction of the social world are produced by a collective, historical work, but from the very structures of this world: structured structures, historically constructed, our categories of thought contribute to produce the world, but within the limits of its correspondence with preexisting structures. It is to the extent and only to the extent that the symbolic naming acts propose principles of vision and

**19-** The first Master's degree in education was created at PUC-Rio in 1965. For more information about the creation of ANPEd, see Vera Henriques' doctoral thesis (1998).

division objectively adjusted to the pre-existing divisions of which they are a product, that such acts have all their efficacy of creative enunciation which, in enshrining what it states, places it in a higher degree of existence, fully realized, which is that of the instituted institution. In other words, the actual effect, i.e., the actually symbolic effect of the representations generated according to schemas adjusted to the structures of the world of which they are a product, is that of enshrining the established order: the “right” representation sanctions and sanctifies the doxical vision of the divisions, manifesting it in the objectivity of an orthodoxy by means of a true act of creation which, proclaiming it before all and in the name of all, confers on it the practical universality of the official. (BOURDIEU, 1989b, p. 238).

Considering the representativeness of institutions in the Southeast and South regions, we proceed with our analyzes to identify the number of productivity fellows distributed by category in the Brazilian regions.

**Table 4 –** Distribution of CNPq research productivity fellows by Brazilian region

Brazilian Region	SR	1A	1B	1C	1D	Total
Southeast	8	23	15	24	46	116 (64%)
South	2	7	6	10	19	44 (24,5%)
Northeast	1	0	3	0	12	16 (8,8%)
Central-West	0	0	1	0	3	4 (2,2%)
North	0	0	0	0	1	1 (0,5%)
<b>Total</b>	11	30	25	35	81	181 (100%)

Source: Database made by Soced from the Curriculum Lattes of CNPq research productivity fellows in 2016.

As can be seen in Table 4, almost all fellows (88.5%) are in the Southeast and South regions. The other three regions of the country concentrate only 11.5% of fellows. This disparity between regions tends to remain, also because of the grants requested by the programs that obtain the best Capes grades for their students.

The physical, economic, and symbolic distances between the South/Southeast and the rest of the country are unlikely to be overcome in the coming decades, especially because of the tendency for “power to attract more power” in the case of science, as pointed out by Merton (1968) when he defined the “Matthew effect”<sup>20</sup>

**20-** In this respect, cf. O efeito Mateus (MERTON, 1968).

The concept (Matthew effect) portrays a situation in which some individuals or groups benefit and continue to benefit over time from recognition understood as credibility that turns into instrumental skills and awards based on past recognition, which involves acquired characteristics such as institutional affiliation, specialties, quantity and quality of awards, which ends up becoming a characteristic attributed, judged, almost automatically, as meritorious. (VICTOR, 2014 p. 39).

## The Southeast at the Origin of Education Research Tradition

When Anísio Teixeira created the Brazilian Center for Educational Research (CBPE) in the mid-1950's, he was also concerned with expanding education research, which led him to create the Regional Centers for Educational Research (CRPEs)

[...] in order to consider Brazilian regional diversity as a relevant aspect for the analysis and interpretation of ongoing social change processes and, consequently, to design new public policies for the educational area. (FERREIRA, 2008,p. 282).

In less than a decade of research developed by the CBPE and CRPEs in the 1950's, an important generation of researchers of social sciences<sup>21</sup> in Brazil developed varied research that can be seen as the origin of a sociology of education strongly founded on empirical studies, which was almost forgotten with the advent of graduate education, whose beginning was marked by an overvaluation of theorizing.<sup>22</sup> It was not until the 1970's that studies such as *Educação e desenvolvimento Social no Brasil*, by Luiz Antonio Cunha (1975) promoted a reappraisal of empirical anchoring for research in the field, which had been highly valued by researchers of those generations.

By looking at Tables 3 and 4, we can see a filter to the highest levels of the CNPq/PQ hierarchy (Senior and 1A), which represents the elite of elites in education research. We can see the small representation of fellows from the North, Northeast and Central-West regions, who are less supported by research resources. These regions concentrate only 11.6% (21) of the total of 181 PQs. Of these, 8.8% (sixteen) researchers are in category 1D, the initial level of CNPq/PQ category 1; four (2.2%) researchers are in the category 1B; and only one (0.55%) is in the Sr category, representing the first generation of CNPq researchers, who completed their doctorate abroad, before the creation of graduate programs in Brazil.

Having noted the pioneering character of the Southeast and South regions in the qualification of researchers, we proceeded to build Table 5 in order to identify the institutions in which these researchers took their doctorates in Brazil and abroad.

**21-** Luiz Pereira, Marialice Foracchi, Aparecida Joly Gouveia, Josildeth Gomes Consorte, among others.

**22-** In this respect, cf. Brandão e Mendonça (2008).

**Table 5 – Institutions where CNPq research productivity fellows took their doctorates**

Doctorate Institution	SR	1A	1B	1C	1D	Total
USP	1	8	7	13	19	48 (26,6%)
PUC/SP	4	5	3	1	9	22 (12,2%)
Unicamp	0	1	3	9	9	22 (12,2%)
UFRGS	1	3	2	6	3	15 (8,3%)
PUC-Rio	0	4	0	0	5	9 (5%)
Unesp	2	1	1	0	4	8 (4,5%)
UFRJ	0	0	0	1	6	7 (3,9%)
UFMG	0	0	1	0	3	4 (2,2%)
PUC/RS	0	1	0	0	1	2 (1,1%)
UFBA	0	0	0	0	2	2 (1,1%)
UFRN	0	0	0	0	2	2 (1,1%)
Escola Superior de Teologia	0	0	0	0	1	1 (0,5%)
FGV	0	0	0	0	1	1 (0,5%)
UFF	0	0	0	0	1	1 (0,5%)
UFPR	0	0	1	0	0	1 (0,5%)
UFSC	0	0	0	0	1	1 (0,5%)
Total in the country	8	23	18	30	67	146 (80,7%)
TOTAL abroad	3	7	7	4	14	35 (19,3%)

Source: Database made by Soced from the Curriculum Lattes of CNPq research productivity fellows in 2016.

Our data indicate that 51% of CNPq research productivity fellows took their doctorates in only three universities in the country, all of which in the state of São Paulo – USP (26.6%), Unicamp (12.2%) and PUC- SP (12.2%). This hegemony of São Paulo is understandable not only because of USP’s pioneering tradition – the university was created in 1934 and trained the first group of sociologists who dedicated to education research in Brazil<sup>23</sup> – and, most of all, due to the centrality of the economic and social development of the state of São Paulo, which concentrates the dynamism of the financial market in the country to this day.

[The] first and most successful university of the 1930’s was not the national university in Rio de Janeiro, but the university of the State of São Paulo, known today as the University of São Paulo (USP), founded in 1934. For many decades, the State of São Paulo has been the most important center of economic growth in the country, first as the main coffee growing and exporting region, later as a dynamic industrial center which took advantage of the entrepreneurial skills of the

**23-** Luiz Pereira, Marialice Foracchi, supported by Fernando de Azevedo, Florestan Fernandes and Aparecida Joly Gouveia (who took her doctorate abroad).

large number of immigrants from Europe and Brazilians from other regions. (SCHWARTZMAN, 2006, p. 163).

Regarding the extent of São Paulo's pioneer character, we can mention that USP alone, with 22% of the PQs, accounts for the doctorate degrees of 48 of them, fifteen being absorbed in the composition of its faculty.

In analyzing the research productivity fellowship (PQ) awarding system in the area of sociology, Victor (2014) observed the tendency of concentration of resources and benefits for researchers who are or have been fellows, thus resuming the idea of notoriety and enshrinement through PQ fellowships. She points out in relation to CNPq fellows that “notoriety and recognition tend to attract more notoriety and recognition, and in some cases this reinforcement *does not depend on the scientists' performance at the time of evaluation*” (VICTOR, 2014, p. 6-7, emphasis added). By elucidating the Matthew effect, i.e., power that attracts more power, Victor (2014) resumes the idea of the power of the enshrinement of some researchers, for whom the past is more relevant than the present given the norms adopted by the CAs in each area. This dynamic supposedly benefits researchers and institutions that sometimes accumulate resources and development potential in the area to the detriment of institutions that seek, through the fulfillment of CNPq requirements and through their own productivity, a position that provide funds and encouragement for establishing graduate education and research.

Even today, despite all the expansion of graduate programs in education and the attempts to displace the central power from Brazil's Southeast with the creation of Brasília as the capital of the country, the power not only in economic, but also in scientific terms, continues strongly anchored in the Southeast and South, as our data indicate.

In criticizing the evaluation criteria of Qualis and CNPq's CAs, Nascimento (2016) points out mechanisms of power accumulation and feedback, since they are created by a few members of the field's scientific elite as holders of a power that is authorized by the scientific community. Nascimento and Bufrem paraphrase Bourdieu (2011, page 53) in stating that “science gives those who possess it, or who seem to possess it, monopoly over the legitimate point of view, over the self-verifying prediction”. The authors complete this by questioning evaluators' belief that they have the ideal scientific point of view and the most impartial evaluation criteria; they use the following figure of speech: “no one is a good judge when, besides this role, they play another one: that of defendant”.

Indeed, when research development agencies give higher scores to certain types of scientific output through Qualis ratings, they reinforce the positions occupied by each member of the academic elite by giving fellowships and incentives to those who already have differentials in the field and also by hindering the entry of newcomers, i.e., researchers at newer institutions and graduate programs, such as those in the country's Central-West, North and Northeast. The equation is actually much more complex since it also involves spheres of power as Ana Paula Hey (2008) correctly observes. She analyzes the relationship between the academic space and the political sphere to question the lack of autonomy of academia in social sciences and humanities in relation to the sphere of

politics; however, one cannot deny that the logic of evaluation, with its heavy subjectivity around a “belief in scientific truth” (NASCIMENTO, 2016, 140), still privileges some who are more familiar with the game’s rules and dominant power.

The position of each agent in this structure, or rather the weight of each of them to form this structure and at the same time support it, depends on all other researchers as well as on all points in the space and on the relationships between all points. Each point is equivalent to a position, and the position occupied by the researcher will restrict or increase the field of possibilities that is open to him/her. (HEY, 2008 p. 80).

Statements such as these are situated in Bourdieu’s view that science is a field like any other, in which there is an interest in appearing disinterested, i.e., appearing to serve exclusively scientific knowledge. Even though we agree that there is no pure science, we are convinced that there is science’s interest in producing valid knowledge for the specific field, but such knowledge is never devoid of the purpose of interesting peers and competitors and, therefore, producing positive effects for the field and for their own position within it.

## **Provisional considerations**

The data we analyzed indicate that institutions that stand out in the academic world’s hierarchical structure maintain the potential of producing new researchers, who are usually better equipped institutionally to struggle over positions of prominence in the field of research, which are compatible with the prestige and power that these institutional agents have consolidated. Bourdieu (2004b) points out that positions legitimized by the state allow these agents to participate in the decision-making sphere that sets the rules of the game (commissions and the like) which, in turn, allow them to maintain and expand positions of power within the field.

We are, however, aware of the reflective characteristic or mirror effect which is to analyze a field of which we are part and in which we occupy a specific position from where we observe and experience it (BOURDIEU, 2004a, 2004b).

Throughout the study, our intention was to demonstrate the system’s distortion, and therefore we decided not to characterize the researchers but only the institutions as a way of characterizing the problem of the regional disparities presented. Our analyzes show that there is a policy that reproduces the hierarchy of fellows and ends up favoring institutions, especially those in the South and Southeast regions, which already have reasonable conditions for conducting scientific work by means of a dynamic of greater funds for the research they conduct besides the distribution of scholarships to their researchers.

This article deals only with a first exploration of the database we created to analyze and understand the characteristics and strategies that have been structuring the construction of academic hierarchies among us. Some of the characteristics we present specifically with regards to education show the Matthew effect, not only in institutional, but also in regional terms. The institutional composition of the committees (represented by PQs at different universities), the comparison with the prominent positions in representative institutions of

the area, such as the ANPEd, and the publications and advisory developed by productivity fellows will be some aspects of this institutional research program we are developing. Therefore, we continue to explore the training, work and output characteristics of these researchers who are distinguished by the CNPq research productivity grant.

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