

Blurring The Boundaries Of Public And Private Education In Brazil

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A typical analysis of the privatization of education in Latin America focuses on private sector development at the expense of public education. In this paper, I propose a different view that will highlight the blurring of boundaries between public and private education in Brazil. This confusion perpetuates the historical duality of the education system, with the privileged members of the population receiving a high quality education while everyone else receives educational services of inferior quality.

Keywords: inequality, privatization, public education, Brazil

A number of studies have already addressed the privatization of public education in Brazil and around the world. These works attempted to highlight the development of the market-driven logic in the sector of education. The role of international organizations, such as the World Bank or the IMF, has been widely analyzed (Altmann, 2002). In this paper, I shall adopt a different perspective by focusing on the blurring of boundaries between public and private sectors.

In the first part of this article, I shall discuss the relation between public and private schools from an historical perspective. Various lobbying groups have favored the emergence of a powerful private sector (religious and for-profit) throughout the twentieth century, and their links with political movements will be analyzed.

The second part of the article is devoted to the changing enrolments in the different school networks during the past decade. The private sector has increased its presence and now seems to enjoy the exclusive privilege of the reproduction of elites at the primary and secondary levels. However, the private higher education network is, despite its recent quantitative expansion, aimed primarily at the middle and lower social classes. Children of elites will most often go to the public university system. They benefit from the quality of instruction received in the private system during their primary and secondary years, and are thus able to pass the public

university entrance exam (*vestibular*), considered highly selective.

The third part of the article is dedicated to the increasing blurring of boundaries between public and private networks. Beyond the conventional public funding of private education, other, more subtle mechanisms are observed in Brazil: the purchase, by public schools, of teaching materials mainly produced by the private sector (known in Brazil as the *apostila*), and teachers working in the two networks (private and public). I aim, firstly, to analyze who benefits from this blurring of boundaries, and secondly, to show how it represents the main catalyst of educational inequality in Brazil.

The fourth part of the article will discuss the possibility of a genuine regulation of relations between public and private education policies. Two fundamental questions will be raised. The first refers to the effectiveness of the current massive public investment in basic education to improve quality and to bring back at least part of the middle and upper classes to the public system. The second question concerns the ongoing reforms of the *vestibular* and their consequences on the current two-tiered structure of the education system.

The dual history of education in Brazil

The process of schooling in Brazil began in 1549 with the landing of the first colonial expedition sent by the Portuguese. With settlers, soldiers and craftsmen, this expedition brought six Jesuits (four priests trained in

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theology at the University of Paris and two theological students) (Mesquida, 2010). Immediately after landing, the Jesuits began their mission of education by establishing schools for the Indians and colleges for the nascent agrarian elite of Portuguese origin. Separate schools for the underprivileged and colleges for the elite would make a lasting history of education in Brazil over the centuries and would result in a dual system of education. The funding of schools and Jesuit colleges was provided through the tithes collected by the Templars in Tomar, Portugal. This funding was a private grant (Mesquida, 2010). Thus, educational institutions of the Jesuits in Brazil were religious institutions, maintained by a private institution, which served the interests of the state (the Portuguese Crown).

For 210 years (1549-1759), the Jesuits were responsible for education in the Portuguese colony in Brazil, developing a dual education. On the one hand, a practical and utilitarian education was provided for some Indian children and agricultural workers (primary school). On the other hand, a preparatory education was organized for the children of the elite to further their studies in Europe and to exercise the function of political leadership in the colony (Azevedo, 1971).

The expulsion of the Jesuits in Brazil by the Marquis of Pombal in 1759 took place in a context marked by the spread of ideas of the Enlightenment in Portugal; by attempts to bring the country out of feudalism and the desire to enter the capitalist system of Europe. The Jesuit eviction created a vacuum, and for nearly three quarters of a century, the country remained virtually without any primary education. It was only five years after the proclamation of independence that the general law of 1827 established primary schools in Brazil (Berger, 1984).

If there was a gap in the basic education of lower class children, it was a different case for the children of the ruling class who benefited from the presence of mentors to prepare them for Portuguese and French universities. In addition, political independence (1822) and the republican movement (1870), in the context of the introduction of liberal ideas from France and the United States, opened the country to

private educational interventions, whether secular or linked to religious schools. The Jesuits returned to Brazil in 1842 and funded their educational activities through the charging of fees from students. At the same time, the Bishop of São Paulo, Dom Antonio de Melo, launched an impassioned call for foreign female congregations to establish schools for girls. Don Antonio de Melo also urged religious educators from Europe (Franciscans, Dominicans and Benedictines etc.) to work in the private educational system (Mesquida, 1994; Ramalho, 1976).

Towards the end of the second half of the 1860s, Protestant missionaries (Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists) also benefited from the opportunity made possible by Act No. 54 of 1868, which abolished public high schools in the province of São Paulo. These missionaries established special schools for children of the elite Republican oligarchy and the agrarian South considered as the most developed part of the country. These missionaries, however, did not forget the children of workers, as parochial schools were opened on the outskirts of cities in the wake of the process of industrialization. Disadvantaged children were made literate and needed to pay only a symbolic fee. For gifted children, scholarships were granted to enable them to become pastors or to learn professions and so disseminate the ideas and American values in the country, according to the expectations of the Brazilian Republican elite (Mesquida, 1994).

Imported Protestant colleges from the United States borrowed a form of training deemed "modern" by the Brazilian political elite. The teaching practice, developed with the help of the inductive method, favored the formation of free, democratic, rational and enterprising men (Mesquida, 1994).

Thus, the Brazilian state has relinquished the private education of the elite while taking on the educative role of children of the working class. Therefore, while the Brazilian elite has been formed in the Catholic and Protestant colleges and enjoyed a quality education for the training of managers, workers' children have always received poor quality education in the state network,

education designed to train docile and resigned workers (Frigotto, 2001).

The development of industrialization, from the first half of the twentieth century, especially after the First World War, which demanded the professionalization of workers, was primarily concentrated in the most populated cities in the southeast region: Juiz de Fora (Minas Gerais), Rio de Janeiro (Federal Capital), São Paulo and Campinas (São Paulo). There came a series of regional educational reforms with the stated aim of putting education in Brazil to "the height of the Century", that is to say, having educational institutions meet the demand for training skilled manpower for industrial, commercial and service occupations.

During the government of Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945), the "lei orgânica" earned primary basic education through secondary, industrial, and commercial sectors. Secondary education had the aim of training the children of the affluent to pursue studies in institutions of higher education (offered mostly by private educational institutions and/or private institutions subsidized by the government). Industrial education, on the other hand, gave technical training to the children of workers with the goal of training the necessary manpower for the service sector of the urban economy. During the 20th century, alongside the private colleges for the elite, many initiatives to create public schools to train high-level elites in particular have been launched in the State of São Paulo (Cunha, 2000).

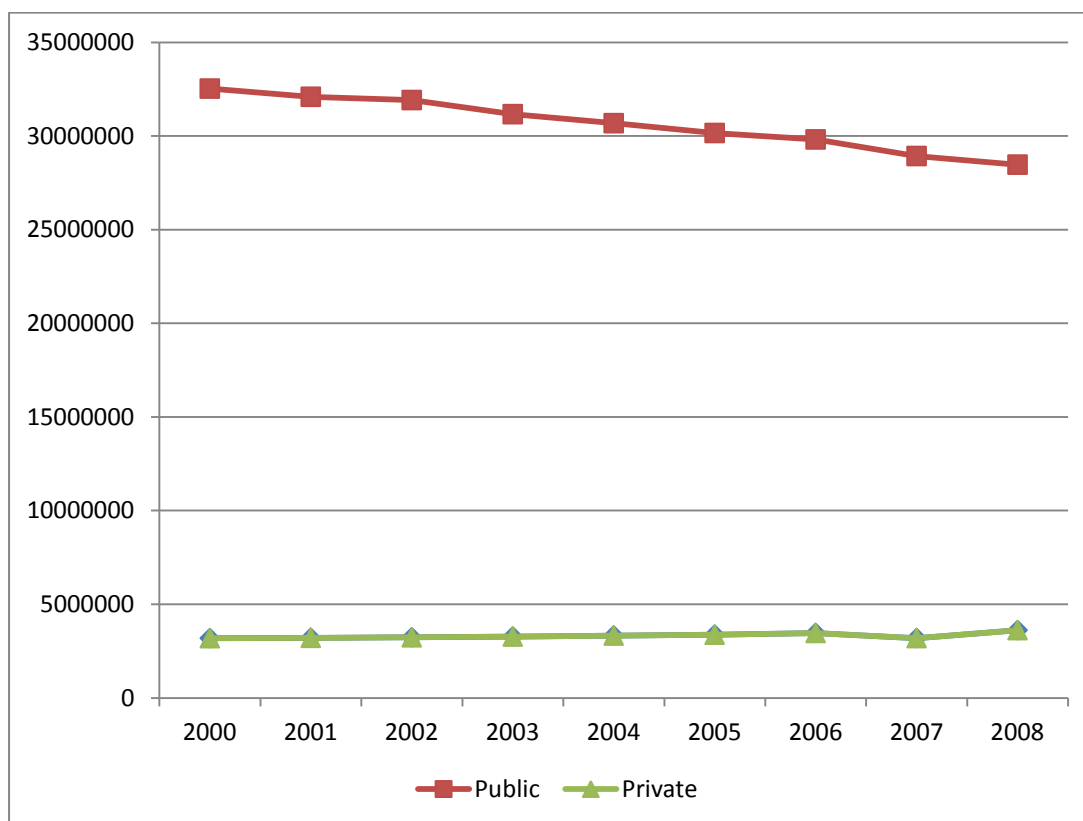
The twentieth century was marked by the consolidation of the historic duality between

public schools for the poor and private schools for the elite. This dualism, which continues today, contributes to maintaining multiple parallel networks of education, perpetuating and increasing the distance between the groups that constitute the basic social structure of Brazilian society.

After this brief historical analysis of the relationship between private and public education, it is useful to emphasize that this paper does not underestimate the progress made in Brazil during the last two decades in the education of the disadvantaged. The programs launched in the wake of the adoption of the new educational law (LDB) have enabled the country to largely resolve the problem of access to basic education. Inequalities of access have been largely erased. In addition, the program *purse-family* has made marked improvements in keeping children in school.

The expansion of private sector

The second part of the article is devoted to the changes in the distribution of students among the different networks (public and private) in recent years. As regards basic education, a small decline in the overall numbers of students in the public sector is observed. The private sector, however, has increased slightly as shown in the chart below. In 2006, the former model (eight years) of basic education has been amended by Law No. 11. 274, which regulates the expansion of basic education to nine years (6-14 years). The law made school compulsory for children over six.

Figure 1: enrolment in public and private schools

Source: MEC/INEP

Even if enrollments in the private sector remain rather weak compared to the public sector, it is important to highlight the elitist nature of private education in Brazil. According to Curi and Menezes-Filho (2009), 16% of youth 0-25 years attend private schools. This percentage varies from 18.5% from 1st to 4th grade, 11% from 5th to 8th grade and 15.5% in the secondary grades.

The state of Rio de Janeiro and the Federal District of Brasilia are areas where the private sector is most developed, while the states of Bahia and northern regions of the country are regions where the private sector is less developed.

Curi and Menezes-Filho (2009) pointed out that the private schools have a monopoly on children of the elite. 80% of students enrolled in private schools belong to the

highest category of income and 5% belong to the lowest category of income.

The poorest families spend about 10.6% of their income to pay monthly installments for private schooling compared to the affluent families who spend only 5% (Curi & Menezes-Filho, 2009). Opting for the private sector is a heavy burden for poor families.

To provide an education that guarantees entry into higher education institutions, a family can spend approximately R\$ 2,756 per month for high school. This value is close to what the government spends annually for a student in public secondary schools. It may be noted that fees can vary by region and location. In the North, these values range from R\$ 400 to R\$ 700, while in Goiás, a family can spend between R\$ 300 and R\$ 800 (Andifes, 2010).

This significant investment in private schools is geared to success in the *vestibular* exam, which is very often used as the admission procedure since 72.5% of entries to university in Brazil occur using this exam (INEP, 2008). However, the scores of students in the national review of middle education (ENEM) have recently been used as a supplementary means for the *vestibular* for the access to universities. The use of these scores could intensify in the years to come. In 2009, the Ministry of Education presented a proposal for the reformulation and the use of the ENEM

as a form of selection for unified access to federal public universities.

Public investments in primary and secondary education are modest compared to higher education. However, one can observe that to have chance to enroll in a public university, it is necessary to be educated in private schools during the primary and secondary years. The following table 1 shows that public investment in 2008 for the first four years of basic education is five times lower than public investment in higher education.

Table 1 Estimated direct public investment in education per student in \$R

	Basic Education		Secondary Education	Higher Education
	Grades 1 – 4	Grades 5 – 8		
2000	1.365	1.39	1.324	15.341
2001	1.349	1.518	1.506	15.161
2002	1.576	1.463	1.060	14.374
2003	1.526	1.450	1.217	12.594
2004	1.638	1.656	1.133	12.749
2005	1.833	1.746	1.146	12.965
2006	2.019	2.217	1.568	13.076
2007	2.408	2.509	1.837	13.861
2008	2.761	2.946	2.122	14.763

Source: INEP/MEC

The analysis of public investment per pupil in public primary education compared to the costs of the private schools shows a significant difference and helps to explain the poor quality of public education. Total monthly costs paid by families for one year of private school are three times larger on average than what the state spends for the same student (This calculation was performed for the entire primary grades by taking the example of a private religious college in Curitiba). This reflects a problem of the allocation of public investment in education between the different levels of education. Public higher education generally welcomes children from privileged backgrounds who have gone through private primary and secondary education.

Children of disadvantaged classes usually attend public primary and secondary schools and are not well prepared to pass the entrance examinations to public universities. They are

obliged; if they want to pursue higher education, to go take in charge their own expenses. What they spend for this purpose is comparable to what the advantaged classes have invested in private primary and secondary education. In other words, governments spend more for the education of privileged groups than for the disadvantaged ones.

The case of the University of São Paulo (USP), the most prestigious public institution in Brazil, illustrates the low percentage of students from public primary and secondary education. In 2009, 30% (3157) of the students who entered this university came from the public schools. In 2010, this percentage dropped to 26% (2717). This percentage corresponds to that observed in 2006 before the USP introduced a bonus system favoring students from the public schools. In other-words, public policies to assist disadvantaged

students failed to destabilize the structural inequalities between different social groups (Folha de São Paulo, 2010).

The inability of public policies, aimed at reducing educational inequalities for disadvantaged groups, is illustrated by the use of the ENEM in the program ProUni (Programa Universidade para Todos: The University Program for All). ProUni was created in 2004 by Act No. 11.096/2005. It aims to provide scholarships to private institutions of higher education. The ProUni looks at graduates of public or private schools from families with incomes up to three times the minimum wage in Brazil (R\$ 520). The program covers about 100,000 students per year. (ProUni / MEC).

Founded in 1998, ENEM test aims to assess the skills and knowledge of students at the end of secondary education. This test is

used wholly or partly as a criterion for access to higher education by 500 IES. Only 8% of the best schools on the ENEM are public. Private schools allow students to perform better in the ENEM (Folha de São Paulo, 2009).

According to Castro (2000), Brazil has a gross enrollment rate in small higher education. When considering the target age group of 20 to 24 years, access to university remains relatively elitist (14,8%). The indicators are even worse in the north and northeast where, despite increasing access to basic levels, very few students have access to secondary education and even less to higher education. In these regions, the increase in enrollment has occurred primarily in the private network as shown in the table 2 below.

Table 2 Evolution of enrolment in higher education by region 2000/2008

		2000		2008	
		n	%	n	%
Brazil	Total	2.694.245	100	5.080.056	100
	public	887.026	33	1.273.965	25
	private	1.807.219	67	3.806.091	75
North	Total	115.058	4,2	323.190	6,3
	public	71.412	8	136.519	10,7
	private	43.646	2,4	186.671	5
North-East	Total	413.709	15,3	912.693	18
	public	271.795	30,6	383.539	30
	private	141.914	7,8	529.154	14
South-East	Total	1.398.039	51,8	2.512.560	49,4
	public	304.691	34,3	394.903	31
	private	1.093.348	60,4	2.117.657	55,6
South	Total	542.435	20	887.182	17,4
	public	161.729	18,2	237.384	18,6
	private	380.706	21	649.798	17
Centre-West	Total	225.004	8,35	444.431	8,7
	public	77.399	8,7	121.620	9,5
	private	147.605	8	322.811	8,4

Source : INEP/Sinopses estatísticas do ensino superior 2000/2008.

These statistics show the unequal geographical distribution of institutions of higher education between private and public sectors. The largest number of institutions is

located in the southeast: 44% of public institutions and 47.8% of private schools are located in this region. Although the Southeast is the most populated region in the country, it

remains also the most advantageous in higher education. The explosion in the number of courses for graduation in the private sector is also linked to LDB/1996 (Lei da educação diretrizes e basis). During the period 1996-2006, the private sector has experienced a growth of over 324.2% and the public network was satisfied with a growing, albeit strong, but that represents only 120% (Duarte & Segenreich Castanheira, 2009).

To go beyond the historical analysis and comparative links between public and private education, it seems essential to confirm the main thesis of this paper by identifying the subtle mechanisms for the blurring of boundaries between these two sectors.

Blurring of boundaries between growing educational sectors

The third part of the article will be devoted to the analysis of the current confusing of boundaries between public and private sectors. Beyond the conventional public funding of private education, other more subtle mechanisms are observed: the purchase by public schools of teaching materials produced by the private network (known in Brazil as *apostila*), and teachers teaching in both networks. Firstly it is important to analyze who benefits from this blurring of boundaries, and secondly, to show how it is the main catalyst of educational inequality in Brazil.

Analysis of the connections between public and private networks and the contribution of these links to the genesis of inequality in Brazil has prompted researchers to be creative in illustrating this phenomenon. Thus, Cunha (2007) uses the term "bend" to illustrate the relationship between state and market in education. Davies (2009) speaks of "privatization by omission". It seems that the metaphor of "blurring boundaries" is appropriate and relevant for analyzing the construction of educational inequality in Brazil. Blurring helps to dilute responsibilities, including that of the state and political elites. It seems that this blurring of boundaries between public and private education, which is the producer of inequalities, goes through five key mechanisms: (a) the enabling legislation for private education, (b) public funding for the private sector, (c) public-private partnership,

(d) the provision of formatted educational material (*apostila*) for public education by the private sector, and (e) the movement of students and teachers between the public and private networks.

(a) The enabling legislation for private education

First, note that governments in Brazil, particularly through legislation, have not neglected the education sector in recent years but are more present in legislation, financing and regulation. During the military regime (1964-1985), private initiatives in the education sector were encouraged. As highlighted by Cunha (2007), the military regime had political and ideological affinities with the promoters of educational privatization. After the gradual return of democracy in the 80s, the legislation continued to support private initiatives. The regulation of this sector was also enhanced without hindering the private sector.

Brazilian law distinguishes two types of private educational institutions: non-profit private institutions (religious schools or community) and for-profit private institutions. The former enjoy a number of privileges such as tax benefits and low interest rates for loans by the National Bank of Economic Development (BNDES). However, since both types of private institutions enjoy considerable autonomy in management and policy, it is legitimate to ask where the border is situated between the two.

Religious institutions or charities seek to gain the status of public institutions to be able to request access to public funds. They claim to be public and non-state institutions as they have a non-profit character. The flexibility provided by LDB/1996 encouraged the private sector which seeks only the profit by education. Large companies invest in education with the sole aim of profit. Students become commodities and are traded by private schools with an average value of \$2,500 USD per student. Education becomes a commodity and allows companies to succeed in their introduction in the stock market. Capital appreciation allows the progressive purchase of small establishments and thus, the forming of large companies, such as Anhaguera

Educacional SA, the first company to join the Brazilian stock market since 2007 (Chaves, 2009). According to the Folha de Sao Paulo (September 2010), the company currently enrolls over 300,000 students. It had also to seduce the director of Google Brazil to increase its shares in the education market and develop the information and communication technologies in education. The company aims to expand aggressively over the next decade a turnover of BRL 1 billion, an increase of 40% compared to today.

(b) Public funding of the private sector

One of the education policy initiatives which clearly illustrates the privileges granted to the private sector consists in the program ProUni. If the original idea of this program is generous in that it aims to increase access to higher education for the poorest sections of the population, the application of the program demonstrates the private sector's ability to capture public funding. The program works as follows: The private higher education institutions that offer free tuition to disadvantaged students receive some aid in the form of tax deductions. Instead of being limited to private non-profit networks, the program was extended to for-profit institutions (Cunha, 2007).

An alternative policy would have allowed public universities to offer more places for disadvantaged students by giving them the means and resources essential to the smooth running of training program. The REUNI program (*Reestruturação e das Universidades Expansão Federais*) was introduced in 2007 with the goal of increasing the capacity of federal universities.

(c) Public-Private Partnership

Peroni (2006) analyzed the adverse effects of the blurring of boundaries between public and private sectors by taking two Brazilian NGOs as examples: *Alfabetização Solidária* (Alfasol) and *Instituto Ayrton Senna* (IAS). Despite the fact that Alfasol presents itself as a nonprofit NGO, the Union's Court of Auditors (TCU) considers Alfasol to be a federal government program. The implementation and management of the program is private but the main funding is public. With regard to IAS,

which is also a non-profit NGO, Peroni (2006) analyzes its "*Vencer*" program which aims to improve the quality of student learning in public education. This NGO receives not only direct public funding but also indirect funding through tax benefits to the program corporate partners. Why is there so much public investment in private institutions (NGOs):

In this particular period of capitalism where the state is in crisis and has spent too much inefficiency in social policy, a popular strategy is to diminish the role of the state, transferring the coordination and implementation of some programs to the private sector, taken to be more efficient. (Peroni, 2006, p. 120)

One should note that the consequences of this public-private partnership in the education sector is that the management methods of the private network come inside the public sector (decentralization, autonomy, accountability, performance, control, distance education, etc.). According to Frigoto and Ciavata (2003), decentralization and autonomy are the transfer mechanisms to economic, social and educational responsibilities if the country wants to compete in the market and sell products or services. Privatization represents the maximum of the market and the minimum of the state. In other words, the State disarticulates the public heritage by privatizing public services that were considered a citizen's rights. Thus, the market takes place as the sole regulator of rights. These authors argue that the dictatorship of the neoliberal ideology will leave the debate on education and training in the hands of companies that will help shape the direction of education. These entrepreneurs will set out the responsibilities to be assessed at the end of the secondary and vocational education.

(d) Provision of educational material formatted for public education by the private sector (*apostila*)

The fourth mechanism through which the boundaries between public and private networks are blurred even more in Brazil is

teaching materials. This concerns the provision of educational materials to public schools by private institutions. This material is pompously called "Education System" (*Sistema de ensino*) since it is a turnkey delivery of educational content covering several school years. Adrião, Garcia, and Arelaro Borghi (2009) analyzed data available on this phenomenon from 645 municipalities of the State of São Paulo and covering the period from 1997 to 2006 (see table 3 below). Their findings are instructive. Municipalities, especially those with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants, have tended to search for a variety of resources for teaching from private companies: teaching materials for teachers and students (*apostila* and CD-ROMs), teacher training, monitoring the use of

materials. Private companies are not just as suppliers of materials but are also involved in formulating the policy guidelines for municipal education.

Public schools that use *apostila* have acquired a certain prestige among the customers of the impoverished middle class population considered unable to attend quality private education. In São Paulo, over a third of the students in municipal schools have teaching guidelines sold by private groups. Public school districts use federal funds to pay for partnerships with private companies that provide equipment and training of teachers at a cost of R\$ 145 to R\$ 260 per student per year (Tofol, 2006). This acquisition aims to improve education or reduce school failure.

Table 3 Municipalities of São Paulo having acquired an "education system" (*apostila*)

Municipality size	Total number of municipalities of São Paulo	Number of municipalities having acquired an "education system" (<i>apostila</i>)
Very small municipalities, less than 10,000 inhabitants	295	79
Small municipalities of 10,001 to 50,000 inhabitants	234	71
Municipalities averaging between 50,001 and 100,000 inhabitants	54	05
Municipalities with large population, 100,001 to 500,000 inhabitants	54	06
Very large municipalities, more than 500,001 inhabitants	8	--
Total	645	161

Source: Adrião, Garcia, Borghi & Arelaro (2009)

Adrião, Garcia, and Arelaro Borghi (2009) highlight the fact that smaller municipalities are more vulnerable to the mercantile assault of the private sector. Consequently, the delivered material is of poor quality and is not comparable to that aimed for private schools. Moreover, the observations made by the authors of this study tend to highlight the existence of a monopoly of four private companies on this lucrative market (two from São Paulo: Objetivo and TOC, and two others, Positivo Paraná and OPET).

This shows that a number of powerful institutions such as Objetivo and Positivo, who made their wealth in the preparation of courses for academic exams (*vestibular*), largely dominate the market of school materials. Other institutions, such as the Marist schools network linked to the Catholic Church, are also to be found in this niche market. To overcome the decline in opportunities for recruitment of new students in primary and secondary education, the private market leads its attacks on educational publishing with millions of public school students as targets.

This trend is facilitated by the weakness of the public sector of educational publishing in Brazil compared to other emerging countries such as India, China or Indonesia.

Using educational materials produced by private companies provides financial and electoral advantages to local elites. Irregularities in the transactions are periodically reported to the justice system. Two years ago, the Court of Accounts of the State (ECA) issued regulations requiring municipalities to organize competitions for the purchase of educational materials (*apostila*). The use of private system *apostila* in public education was seen as a bargaining election. The purchased equipment was changed when the political opposition won the elections (Adrião, Garcia, Borghi & Arelaro, 2009). This has caused instability in the municipal education policy. Partnerships between the private and the public schools in São Paulo raises many problems: 1) lack of social or technical control, 2) conceptual and educational weakness of the products, 3) double payment for the same service since the Federal Ministry of Education provides free educational materials, 4) quality of teaching subject to a logic of profit, and 5) standardization of content and curriculum as the sole parameters of quality education.

The discussion on the *apostila* is also connected to the reduced autonomy of the teacher. With the widespread use of this material, teaching becomes more rigid and reductionist, even if the systematic content can be useful for some students throughout the year. The *apostila* regulate and standardize practices in the classroom, giving teachers little room for reflective thinking or critiques. It is a process of de-professionalizes teachers by converting them into zealous and docile users of the *apostila*.

(e) The movement of students and teachers between the public and private sectors.

The movement of students between the public and the private networks illustrate the structurally depriving character of educational inequalities. Let us examine an illustration of the trajectory of two students from contrasting social classes that made it from primary school to university. Generally speaking, families

would develop multiple strategies to enable their children go the farthest in their schooling.

The student coming from a socially privileged background would probably have been attending private schools throughout his/her elementary and secondary schooling. He/she is also likely to have passed the entrance exam for a public university. For the other student coming from a disadvantaged social group, he/she has attended the public school during the primary and secondary years. He/she might have opted for a private education in the last part of high school in order to increase his/her chances of passing the *vestibular* examination. For the university level, he/she has taken a course in the private sector.

Let us, then, examine the public funding of these two young people, whose trajectories intersect, as one passed from private to public and the other from public to private. As the average governmental expenditure for a college student is largely higher than the average public expenditure for a student's primary or secondary schooling, the Brazilian state has probably spent more funds on the student from the privileged class than his counterpart from an underprivileged family. In addition, private spending for the families of the two students are equivalent, since the amount that a favored social class family spends in primary and secondary education is equal to the investment of a disadvantaged student for the graduate studies in the private sector. It should be noted here that the duration of education in private universities is often extended as the students are obliged to work in order to support their spending. The dropout rate is also high.

Even if this comparison is brief and does not take into account the availability of scholarships for students of poor families, it is grossly unfair that the Brazilian educational system accommodates students from advantaged groups in the public university sector.

The daily travel between public and private networks of many Brazilian teachers was highlighted in a study by Akkari and Pompeu (2010). This study showed not only the necessary combination of two teaching loads in both systems for teachers but also the

different modalities of engagement in the public and private sectors. In the latter, teachers are subject to strict controls and accountability. Paradoxically, this means that the price of a good teacher commitment in the private sector is accompanied by a disengagement from the public one.

Toward a greater regulation of educational networks

The fourth part of the article will discuss the possibility of a new regulation of relations between public and private networks through public policy. First, it is difficult to predict whether the current massive public investment in basic education will be able in the coming years to attract the middle and upper classes to public education. It is important to note that it is difficult to improve the quality of education in the public system as its degeneration has lasted a long time. Moreover, in big cities, the problem is not only educational, but it is also at the level of safety, since urban violence and drugs are present in public schools.

Regarding the reform of entry exam to university initiated by the Ministry of Education, strong resistance raised from different actors: universities, parents, etc.

Cunha (2007) believes that the conflicting forces that determine the segmentation of the Brazilian educational system are the state (Ministry of Education, National Board of Education, National Council of Education, secretaries of state legislatures, municipal leaders of education, and public institutions of education) and the market. This includes private educational institutions and their representative bodies. At the intersection of market and state, Cunha (2007) places the corporate organizations. It seems that in this panorama of forces, Cunha underestimates the key role played by elected officials and political elites, whatever the size and territorial level in which they represent their citizens (from elected municipal representative to president of the republic). These elected officials are the major players that shape the laws governing schools and public finances. Their actions not only determine the framework of conditions under which the private sector operates but also the manner of how the public expenditure on education will

be used. These elected people are also consumers of education. Let us imagine for a moment that they would opt for consistency in enrolling their children in public schools, as proposed by Senator Buarque in a bill that would have changed the face of public education in Brazil if it had not been buried in parliament.

Moreover, teachers, and their representatives, are a force in the ability to consolidate and develop the public sector of education. The same consistency can be expected of them as users and supporters of public schools. What credibility can a teacher have if on one hand he/she asks the state to improve the quality of public education and on the other hand is only willing to educate his/her own children in private schools (Akkari & Pompeu, 2010). It is therefore a necessary alliance, between both the state, aware of its historical mission of public education, and public school teachers, with their social responsibility, that can change the unequal structure of the education system.

Recently, a bill has created a social criterion to determine a *vestibular* ranking giving priority to register students with lower family income. The senator who proposed the law believes it can increase the chances of access to university for students with low family incomes (O Globo, 2010). Finally, it seems worth pointing out that projects from the Ministry of Education to ensure new arrangements for access to university education (*reforma do vestibular*) may allow more children from disadvantaged groups to enter public universities. This would certainly contribute to a small reduction of educational inequalities.

Conclusion

In this article, I have attempted to defend the thesis of the blurring of boundaries between public and private sectors in Brazilian education. I have shown that the notion of duality is a historical fact in the Brazilian education system. Both the Jesuits and other religious institutions have established separate educational paths according to social class. Consolidated during the second half of the 20th century by the ideological alliances of economic elites with the military regime, the traditional, religious, private education, with

the addition of a commercial aspect, began an expansion which has not been dampened by the gradual return of democracy in the 80s, nor by the leftist government of Lula in the last 8 years. Instead, many legislative changes have encouraged the development of private institutions of higher education, particularly in the 90s. These have targeted the families of middle and working classes, who hope for improved access to employment by increasing the years spent in school.

Beyond the circulation in both directions of students between public and private sectors (privileged classes abandoning the private during the transition to higher education while poor families are forced to leave the public during the transition to higher education), I pointed out the use of public funds to support the private sector in different ways. In this opaque landscape with blurred borders, the losers are the poor and working-class families who struggle to keep up with the financial requirements of the education market. As for the government, they seem overwhelmed and unable to play their regulatory role despite their efforts to reduce educational inequalities with multiple programs (ProUni, ReuUni, quotas).

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