Schools for the elite, schools for the poor: The same educational system, contrasting socialization environments

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Abstract. Drawing upon two recent qualitative studies on contrasting contexts – two prestigious and expensive private schools, and two settings of public schools included in a national program to foster education in poor areas (TEIP) – the article analyzes common and divergent features in schooling cultures and strategies, in Portugal. Data from surveys, content analysis, focus groups, interviews and direct observation, collected in each school are compared, especially on four dimensions: social background, organizational strategy, "socialization styles", and meanings of school. The concept of total socializing project is used to characterize the schooling experience in "elite" establishments, while the concept of partial socializing project to understand the educational projects in "priority intervention territories". Finally, a common strategy to enhance success and integration is outlined: the promotion of deep relationships within educational communities (students, parents, teachers, directors and other local agents), nevertheless anchored to very different resources, ideologies, actions and goals.

Keywords: inequality; diversity; schooling; management; organizations

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Introduction

In modern societies, the educational system plays a key role in the socialization of each new offspring, shaping the social future, in issues as economic performance, social cohesion, political participation, cultural practices, among others. Based on a research on schooling in socially contrasting environments our main idea is that current trends in Portuguese education – while effective in the inclusion of all social groups in larger schooling paths – are oriented towards a relative fragmentation of youth in different socialization experiences.

As many sociologists have pointed out, school democratization does not mean the end of inequalities, but the reconfiguration of educational and social hierarchies. Thus, current emphasis on pluralism and freedom of choice shall be examined, in combination with an increase of standardized assessments and published ranks of schools, as an opportunity as well as a major challenge for social cohesion and equity principles, especially in times of economic recession.

Historically, the Portuguese educational system is highly centralized and mostly composed by state schools. Previous studies have found important asymmetries within the state system, including schools with most students from privileged social backgrounds and others attended by poor populations, often side by side (Diogo, 2008; Sebastião, 2009). In the present article, we aim to deepen this research stream, analysing two important trends observed during the last decade. On the one hand, private schools have enlarged its scope and visibility, enhanced by privatization processes in many economic sectors and growing competition dynamics in the educational field. On the other hand, schools with high rates of school failure and violence were integrated in a national program called *Priority Intervention Educational Territories* (TEIP), providing temporary support, including staff enlargement (especially, psychologists, social workers and more teachers), vocational reinforcement and more cooperation with a special police office (Escola Segura).

Seldom worked together, our conviction is that dynamics in both contexts – private schools attended by upper classes and schools addressed to TEIP policy – are structurally connected, and heuristic advantages may arise from comparing them.

First of all, main trends and challenges faced by western educational systems and, specifically, by the Portuguese one - either on public sector or on private one - are sketched, as well as the way they affect youth

socialization experiences. Then, the methodology of the case studies is presented. Thirdly, the main results of the case studies are discussed, focusing on four dimensions: social background, organizational strategy, "socialization styles", and meanings of school. The article concludes with a reflection on the continuities and fragmentations of schools' organizational cultures and strategies, as well as of students' experiences and future expectations.

Theoretical framework

Schools are conceived here not only as means of social and cultural reproduction (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990), but also as sites of social change (Fernández Enguita, 2001), namely, the production of new cultural frames and dispositions, including a changing definition of the "educated people", as well as the identification of those who are excluded from such category, the "uneducable" ones (Levinson and Holland, 1996). Both theories are not contradictory, as long as one accept a vision of schools – and especially, of the educational system – as an arena of multiple projects and enduring conflicts.

Some conceptual remarks are useful. Socialization is here conceived as the enduring participation in a social context and the simultaneous development of cultural patterns (language, values, dispositions, etc.) that fosters such participation (Elias, 1991; Dubar, 2000; Lahire, 2005). School culture is defined as a particular set of these cultural patterns (re)produced throughout time within a specific establishment. Accordingly, school strategy means the set of policies developed by each establishment, in order to achieve its goals (Tyler, 1998; Santos Guerra, 1994**).** Thus, the school as a "socialization environment" is constraint by educational policies and by the strategies of each establishment, but it is ultimately defined by daily interaction between staff, students and parents, especially by the way they interpret and appropriate official frameworks.

In the contemporary societies, the educational systems provide a socialization of the new generations, virtually of all social groups and worldwide, in the dominant values of modernity, stressing individual rationality, control, reflexivity and trust in abstract systems (Giddens, 1991; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2003). Such process has occurred through the establishment of specific subjects and institutions, generating a specific "school culture" (Archer, 1979; Goodson, 1993; Vincent, Lahire and Thin,

1994; Viñao Fraga, 2001). The primary socialization of children from upper classes in such "cultural arbitrary" makes them more successful at school, in average, so schools contributes also to legitimize and reinforce the reproduction of social inequalities (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Still, a new social structure has emerged, for instance, through the consolidation of a "new middle-class", composed by highly-educated professionals, as well as the erosion of traditional sources of power. Moreover, schools also set the stage for the formation of sociability, solidarity and subcultures among students, fostering a sense of generation – and of youth as a particular social category – often through resistance against dominant and official powers (Willis, 1977; Furlong and Cartmel, 1998).

During the last decades, as well as the whole welfare state, the educational systems were increasingly redefined over the bias of the markets (Popkewitz, 1991; Teodoro and Estrela, 2010). The *market logic*, replacing the ideal of "citizen democracy" by the ideal of "consumption democracy" (Van Zanten, 2000: 356), is closely tied to the neoliberal hegemony, whose strength in the educational field results of the congregation of two distinct logics: the conservative one, related to the moral principles, the tradition and the hierarchy justifying parents' responsibility and right to educate their children; and the modernist one, related to the economic and business reality and its internal dynamic that serves as a model to analyze and evaluate the educational system (Burke, 2012). In such an "educational marketization" scenario (Apple, 2005, p. 285), standardized curricula and assessment systems have been reinforced to rank students, schools and countries (Hursh, 2005; Teodoro and Estrela, 2010). Students' and parents' freedom of choice over schools was enhanced (Barroso, 2006; Colombo, 2011). Enterprise management logics were implemented, both in public and private schools (although with different intensities), in order to increase efficiency and competition (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe, 1995). New surveillance technologies over students and teachers were introduced in schools (Kupchik and Monahan, 2006). And a new cosmopolitanism has emerged with the goal of socializing children to be lifelong learners, as well as global citizens and workers (Popkewitz, 2008). Nowadays, schools are mandated to educate the whole person due to a perceived "deficit of socialization in contemporary society" (Tedesco, 2008, p. 34). In the global economy, to gain competitive advantages requires a universal and integral formation, providing individuals not only with technical skills but also with personal and social ones, as critical thinking, communication proficiency, creativity and initiative, positive

behaviour and self-control, sense of responsibility and of cooperation in work teams and pursuit of excellence (Tedesco, 2008).

Since such marketization trends raise issues of segregation, inequality and exclusion, some educational policies were also oriented towards inclusion, especially, through focalized programs to improve education (and to reinforce the social order) among "disturbing students" and in poor districts (Power and Sharon, 2001; Abrantes *et al.*, 2013). Being the dominant trend, the neoliberalism – conceived as the reduction of state property and intervention on economy, markets expansion and the increase of private companies as main economic actors –is not a universal and unified set of policies (Nóvoa, 2000), neither it is the only movement affecting schools worldwide. Depending on different geographical contexts and historical moments, it takes different forms and intensities, as well as it is mingled with other ideological frames. For instance, in some regions, communitarian movements or professional groups (e.g. teachers) have a great power of resistance and they are quite influential in the way education takes place in practice (Fernández Enguita, 2001). Some have recently found evidences of a saturation of the standardized and neoliberal model of school, at least in the Anglo-Saxon countries, observing (and being involved) in the development of new educational models, stressing communities' and parents' participation, children's rights and wellbeing, as well as schools' and teachers' networking experts (Warren and Mapp, 2011; Hargreaves, 2008). For instance, the high achievement of Finish students, in OECD standardized tests, in contrast with the low results obtained by United States, Great Britain or Germany, is being used by many scholars and activists to sustain the failure of educational policies based on markets, control and competition.

The way such trends affects the schooling experiences are under discussion. A study in the UK (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe, 1995) has found that different "circuits of schooling" arose, from neoliberal policies during the 80s and 90s. In more centralized systems, as France, some authors has also observed multiple "contextualized ethics" and "logics of action", sometimes differentiated by school, other times coexisting within the same school (Dubet and Martuccelli, 1994; Van Zanten, 2002). Schools in poor areas and/or devoted to vocational training were under analysis, as *loci* of violence and failure, providing contexts of "exclusion from the inside", in the famous expression of Bourdieu and Champagne (2003).

Therefore, our aim is to discuss how these international trends of marketization and inclusion are affecting two contrasting schooling

contexts in Portugal, as well as to explore how such changes may be related with a whole change of the Portuguese educational system.

Some remarks on the Portuguese case

The Portuguese educational system provides a good context to analyze these multiple trends. On the one hand, the educational system was inspired in the French model, and it remained (officially) centralized and bureaucratic, during the 20th century, under the strict control of the dictatorship, until 1974, and under the democratic and republican principles, afterwards. Still, some private schools were informally protected during the authoritarian period, in order to preserve an alliance with some Catholic and international elites, and others to complement the insufficient public network. After the revolution, the capability of the State to control a fast growing school network was limited, especially, considering the demands of the populations, the power of teachers' labour union, and the frequent economic and political crisis. The number of Ministers of Education (27 in 38 years) is a strong evidence of such instability and limited control over the educational system. Nonetheless, schools were hardly conceived as organizations (more than units of a system), with their own specific cultures and strategies, until the 90s.

During the last two decades, two major trends have challenged such scenario, concerning private and public education. The first one was expanded, consolidated and professionalized. According to Azevedo, Fonseca and Melo (2007), the private sector had experienced difficult times in the years immediately after the Portuguese revolution, under the threat of "the collective and anti-clerical revolutionary ideology" (p. 314) and of the "ghost of nationalizations" (Cotovio, 2011, p. 229). In the early eighties, "when the Marxist tendency lost its strength" (Azevedo, Fonseca and Melo, 2007, p. 315), it was recognized by the Portuguese Parliament as an "equally worthy option to state initiative education" (p. 315).

Meanwhile, Portuguese public schools have also faced new challenges. They were integrated in school settings[3] with increasing autonomy, in a first stage, stressing the construction of local projects and plans by the

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[3] Portuguese public network was re-organized, in order to integrate kindergartens, primary and secondary schools of the same territory in the same "agrupamento de escolas" (school setting) with a unified board and strategy, as well as common services and projects.

"educational community", in a second stage, emphasizing the role of the headmaster in defining strategies, managing resources and assessing results (Barroso, 2006). Standardized systems of evaluation have increased, as well as the pressure over schools and teachers to increase students' scores, so that a divide was consolidated between public schools with different publics, strategies, climates and achievements (Diogo, 2008; Abrantes, 2008; Sebastião, 2009).

Instead of the mandatory traditional way, some influent educational programs were developed as "packages" of support that schools should apply to (many of them were pressured to, especially if they present low achievement scores or violence problems). One case is the *Educational Territories of Priority Intervention* (TEIP) program, settled in 1996, in order to foster education in poor districts, and including around 10% of the public network of basic education since 2010. Schools may elaborate a project, adjusted to the local context, in order to apply to additional technical and financial support, as well as some legal facilities (for instance, to hire directly the stuff, eluding the national regular procedures). Although the main goals are to reinforce students' enrolment and learning patterns, as well as community development, an emphasis on discipline and social control is also a major issue considered by the national administration to select schools and a partnership with the police authorities is compulsory (Canário, Alves and Rolo, 2001; Abrantes *et al.*, 2013).

In 2001, private schools were under the spotlight like never before. In this year, for the first time, an important Portuguese newspaper published a controversial school ranking based on academic students' performance in national examinations, where private schools were better ranked than public ones. Every year, since then, school evaluations are published, allowing parents and teachers to compare schools' performances. Analysing this issue, Melo (2009) points out the promotion of social reflexivity and the effect of agenda-setting produced by the mass media. Indeed, they contribute to the social perception of a qualitative and false dichotomy between private and public schools: the "idyllic oasis" (Almeida and Vieira, 2006, p.75) versus the "arid desert", as some pessimistic voices describe the public school, now opened to social diversity (Mónica, 1997; Crato, 2006). They claim the return to the severe standards of discipline and knowledge and to the rigorous exams of the public school they had attended in the *good old days* they keep in memory, as if the school reality hadn't changed since then and the expansion of schooling hadn't allowed the enrolment of a new clientele: socioeconomically disadvantaged students

with learning difficulties, poor parental support, low expectations and behavioural lack of adjustment to school rules. Moreover, trivial incidents of indiscipline occurred in public schools, grossly exaggerated and distorted, became the focus of newspapers and television and contribute to reinforce the negative representation of the state sector, leading to the construction of public school violence as "moral panic" (Killingbeck, 2001) and increasing parents' fear and perceptions of an inappropriate school climate to promote their children's learning and development. Some lobbies of private schools, supporters of the neoliberal criteria of efficiency and accountability, take advantage of this context to claim the freedom for all parents, rich or poor, to choose the best education for their children (Pinto, 1993; Alvarenga, 2007). They also demand the implementation of a financial mechanism for educational system: the school voucher, suggested by Adam Smith more than two hundred years ago and deeply related with the educational reality of the "quasi-market" that Portugal is passing through (Cotovio, 2004). Voucher supporters argue that private sector is more efficient than public one and they invoke researchers who find evidence that private schools not only produce "better cognitive outcomes" (Coleman *et al.*, 1982, p. 180), but also provide "a safer, more disciplined, and more ordered environment" (Ibidem, p. 180) and create "higher rates of engagement in academic activities" (Ibidem, p. 178) than do public schools.

However, private schools are by no means a homogeneous reality (Estevão, 2001; Ballion, 1980; Van Zanten, 2008), varying in social and prestige, social composition and also in academic performance (Sullivan and Heath, 2003). In fact, some Portuguese private schools – religious, secular or international ones – are a "refuge for rich people or elites" (Estêvão, 2001, p. 444), who pay high fees to guarantee the distinctiveness and the social reproduction assured by the educational quality and the social selectivity (Quaresma, 2010). Every year, these selective schools appear among the top ten of the rankings. On the contrary, other private schools are among the worst positions – namely those receiving disadvantaged students and presenting a social and cultural diversity similar to that of the public schools, as it happens with those benefiting from public funds due to a contract with the state, because they fill (or filled) a gap in public supply in some areas. Since the 90s, the *numerus clausus* policy to the university entrance contributed to an upsurge of private schools specifically designed for students attending secondary education who do not achieve the scores required to assure the access to the college/course they want and who do not accept to redirect their vocations (Vieira, 2007).

The "zapping" (Van Zanten, 2008) to these private schools offers them the right "mix" to attain their goals: a more "flexible" evaluation criteria useful to increase students' annual average grade and a more intensive training to succeed in national exams.

The disparities in academic results between these Portuguese private schools don't allow us to establish an univocal association between privatization and better learning (Tedesco, 2008) and they support recent findings about no significant advantages of this sector (Dronkers and Avram 2010; Elder and Jepsen, 2011). We have good reasons to believe that parental socio-economic status and particularly social and cultural capital play a significant role in these disparities. The hypothesis that the "effect students' socio-economic status" is stronger than the "effect sector" is reinforced by the contrasting academic results of two private institutions run by the same religious congregation (Company of Jesus) and under a similar educational philosophy (Beare *at al.*, 1989): a very selective and prestigious school attended by upper classes and a school with students from different social backgrounds partially financed by the state, under an "association contract". The first one is placed on the top of the ranking; the second one is placed on its end.

The controversy about privatization is rising. Latest news about the most powerful Portuguese group running private schools with "association contract" seem to validate the researchers' scepticism about the virtues of the privatization tendencies, namely in terms of reduction of costs to the state (Cotovio, 2004). When the public schools, with human and material resources, are losing their students and, in the same city, the private schools under "association contract" are increasing their number of classes and are imposing to their teachers low pays, excessive working-hours and flexible contracts (Viana, 2012), there is a strong reason to rethink the risks of the "transformation of education from a public good to a private commodity" (Ball and Youdell, 2007): weakness of public education system, deteriorated by the submersion of some of its schools in "cycles of poor performance and student and teacher attrition" (Ball and Youdell, 2007, p. 43); increase of academic and social segregation (Saporito, 2003); duplication of public costs; negative impacts on teacher's careers (Ball and Youdell, 2007).

In the present article, we aim to discuss how the abovementioned trends (de-centralization, national assessments, private-schools consolidation, and territorial compensatory policies) are affecting the socialization experiences within the Portuguese educational systems. In particular, we wanted to test

if there is a fragmentation of such experiences, according to social classes, mediated by specific organizational resources, cultures and strategies. Actually, such thesis was already sketched in a classic work on the American educational system (Bowles and Gintis, 1976), and it was developed through the concept of "circuits of schooling", in a study on the English education (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe, 1995). However, its explanatory capability was never empirically analyzed in Portugal, and – as noted before – there were historical reasons to doubt of such idea until recent years.

Methodological design

The present article reflects upon some results of two different research projects. This is possible since both of them were oriented by a similar theoretical framework, focusing on issues raised by Bourdieu & Passeron (1970), Willis (1977), Dubet and Martucelli (1994) and Ball & Van Zanten (1998), and in Portugal by Almeida and Vieira (2006) or Sebastião (2009), among others. Both authors have recent research experiences in private elite schools, as well as in TEIP contexts. Moreover, in order to allow a comparison, we focus only in the information that was collected through similar methodological procedures, leaving aside other dimensions of each study not directly comparable

Based on Lahire's (2005) typology of socialization modes, we selected four major indicators to study schools "socialization environments": (1) students' social background, comparing data from questionnaires; (2) organizational strategy, using data from official school documentation and interviews with principals; (3) "socialization styles", exploring school culture especially concerning the relational patterns between teachers, students and parents, through field research and interviews; and (4) meanings of school, analysing students' discourses, particularly during focus groups.

The research on private schools was developed during three years in two prestigious schools attended by elite students from kindergarten to the last year of high school and located in Lisbon. They were selected according three main criteria: to be on the top of the school rankings based on students' scores in the national exams; to have a strong school culture and a holistic view of education; and, finally, to have a long tradition on educating upper classes. This case study aimed at discovering these

educational contexts, sociologically undisclosed, analysing social representations of educational success shared by schools' members, identifying individual, organizational and parental practices to achieve success and observing students' daily life in school. In order to reach these goals, an eclectic fieldwork was carried on. It included a set of research techniques: exploratory interviews with main institutional protagonists; focus group discussions holding students and teachers; a survey administered to 475 students, representatively selected according to the variables gender, school year and field of studies; semi-directive interviews with parents and alumni; direct observations of extracurricular events and of daily activities in playground contexts; finally, content analysis of source documents, as Schools Mission Statements, Internal Rules and Regulations.

The two case studies in poor areas were developed within a project – involving ten researchers and financed by the Ministry of Education – on the impacts of the TEIP program.[4] This program was partially funded by the European Union and it included technical and financial support to school settings, located in poor neighbourhoods and characterized by low academic achievements and/or high violence problems. Although seven school settings were analyzed in our project (see the main results in Abrantes et al., 2013), in the present article we focus on two cases located in poor districts within the Lisbon urban area, in order to explore the comparison with the two elite colleges.

The fieldwork included direct observation, content analysis of the main documents of the school settings, namely, the School Mission Statements, the Intervention Plan (TEIP project), Internal Rules, Curricular Project, Activities Plan, as well as interviews to the Headmaster and General-Assembly President. In each school setting, we organized a focus group with department coordinators and other with professionals contracted under the TEIP program (especially, psychologists and social educators/workers). A survey to a sample of teachers (around 60%) and parents (around 20%) was developed. Moreover, five classes were selected, from different grades and profiles, to an in-depth work, including interviews to teachers and students, as well as assemblies to raise collective positions on some specific topics of the school organization.

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[4] The project "Efeitos TEIP: Avaliação de impactos escolares e sociais em sete territórios educativos de intervenção prioritária" was carried out in 2010 and 2011, on the behalf of the Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology of the Lisbon Institute University, and it was coordinated by Pedro Abrantes, Rosário Mauritti and Cristina Roldão.

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The elite schools

Case studies on elite schooling were carried out in two prestigious private schools attended by students belonging to upper classes' families[5]. Their parents are highly educated and they are employed in prestigious areas, working either as businessmen or as professional.[6] Among them, we find many members of the Portuguese political, economic and cultural elites.

Both schools enrol students with similar background, aims, expectations and strategies. Both pursue the aim of developing the whole person and of challenging students to achieve their full potential, maintaining top performances and reputations. However, they have distinct "personalities" obviously related to different traditions and philosophies: one of them is religious and it is run by the Portuguese Jesuit Congregation; the other one is secular and it is run by a socially and politically recognized family that played a crucial role against Portuguese fascism and in the consolidation of Portuguese democracy.

The religious school intends to socialize their students in three dimensions recognized as essential for youth grow: personal one, constructing an idiosyncratic, autonomous and responsible personality; social one, promoting children contact with the social reality and diversity, developing their sense of belonging to a society and educating them for the importance of civic and social participation; and religious one, transmitting Catholic values and helping students to develop their spiritual life. In line with its goal to form "men and women for others", this school assigns particular importance to the civic dimension, expressing a strong commitment to educate students to solidarity, charity and social care, Catholic values that are constitutive elements of the Jesuit Education. In order to develop the responsibility to live in solidarity, this school promotes "social work" activities: inside school, for younger students; outside school, for elder ones. Students attending secondary education get involved in different voluntary activities, for instance, going each week to a poor

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5 The results presented are based on a PhD project that was carried on beween 2008 and 2011, in the Universidade do Porto, under supervision of Professor João Miguel Teixeira Lopes.

6 38% of mothers have a Degree, 24% a Master, 22% a PhD or a Post-Doc, percentages reaching, respectively, 33%, 23% and 29% for the fathers. Most common fields of work are Engineering, Medicine, Economics and Management. 35% of the parents are businessman/woman.

neighbourhood where they help children doing their homework and their school tasks.

The secular school also defines three main formative dimensions: human one, caring about students' autonomy, self-esteem, creativity and autonomy; academic one, concerning the transmission of cultural, linguistic and scientific legacy; civic one, promoting the development of individual and collective citizenship and of civic engagement. It is more aware of the cultural dimension of education, a main priority since it was founded. Throughout the school year, this school organizes various Thematic Weeks – "Art week", "Science and Literature week" and "Sports week" -, inviting prestigious Portuguese intellectuals and scientists to talk to students and stimulating children's love for learning and intellectual curiosity about all areas of knowledge. School also promotes musical learning, namely through the formation of an orchestra, a dynamic group of students playing various musical instruments that performs in all ceremonies and celebrations of the school life (Beare *et al.*, 1989) and that is enthusiastically applauded by families and teachers.

As we have pointed out, these private schools share a holistic conception of education, stressing that their mission is to provide children with an harmonious development of all dimensions of the human person – a pursue that can be conceived as a "total socializing project", even if these schools cannot be identified with a "total institution" as it was described by Goffman (1961): "a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life" (*ibidem*, p. 11). Headmasters, teachers and parents are unanimous: the project of "integral formation" is the distinctive characteristic of these private schools and the principal key to explain their students' success. Contrary to Tedesco (2008), who believes that all the school system is suffering an increasing pressure to "assume characteristics of a total institution" (*ibidem*, p. 116), these parents are very sceptical about the capacity of the public sector to assure not only the instruction, but also the education they require for their children. According to some parents, public schools have not a coherent core of values and their Mission Statements, in contrast to those of private schools, are "neither clearly defined nor sufficiently consistent" (mother, secular school, 46 years old), making difficult the unification of all members of the educational community around a common ideal and the pursuit of the same goals. For these families, the choice of a good school is a priority, namely because it is a

resource to maintain their class identity (Mension-Rigau, 2007) and social positions. In these selective private schools they look for the value-oriented education and the quality academic education (Quaresma, 2012) that are now more necessary than ever to prepare their "heirs" to face the new challenges resulting from the conjunction of two circumstances threatening their privileges: on the one hand, school democratization, responsible for the processes of credential inflation that "jeopardize the value of the 'higher education good'" (Duru-Bellat, 2012, p. 6) and also for the "offensive strategies from some middle class groups" (Van Zanten, 2005: 160); on the other hand, the tough competition of a *s*tifled labour market which requires, more than never, "conquering strategies" (Van Zanten, 2005, p. 160) namely in terms of an international career. In line with a meritocratic ideology that justifies their own privileges, parents believe – and instil the belief – that the winners will be the best ones who have attended the best schools. To be chosen to teach in these selective and prestigious schools is a source of pride, as one teacher told us, mentioning the "high level" mission he has to accomplish:

> "They [the future elites] are not individuals superior to the others; they are no more than individuals who will have, in the future, a higher responsibility that they will be forced to assume. (…) So, I am proud of being a teacher in this "second home" because of this educational role and also because the most prestigious cultural personalities had worked here as teachers, like me" (secular school, 34 years old).

Working in a deep harmony with families' socialization, these schools help "the heirs" to accept their inheritance – that must be accepted because it is not acquired by osmosis – and to prepare them to develop the indispensable "individual work of appropriation" of the family legacy (Nogueira, 2004). Children are educated to pursue the elite's ideal of excellence in all domains (Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot, 2007), to develop a strong sense of responsibility and to internalize the values of discipline, resilience and hard work. These institutional values and aims are reflected in the organizational vocabulary (Beare *et al.*, 1989), as it happens in the religious school, whose philosophy is encapsulated in a simple motto: *magis*, an omnipresent word that integrates the institutional *ethos* and that is inscribed in official statements and repeatedly invoked in all formal speeches made in the most notable celebrations. During ceremonies, such

as the school entrance ones, headmasters and teachers' speeches are always focused on meritocratic issues and on the excellence pursuit. As we have documented through direct observation, the staff not only recognize and reward students' effort, merit and sense of work and endeavour, but also encourage them to maximize their potentialities.

> "The expectations game is very important in education. Demanding even more and more… The most remarkable characteristic of what an educator should be is to be always demanding more and more of ourselves and of our students and always following the logic of «Learning to Serve», that is to say, we have to be better, so much better as possible" (Head of religious secondary school).

> "Teachers want the best for their students, because they know they have high performances and want to stimulate us; they want to support their students" (student, secular school, 17 years old).

As well as the schools staff, families educate children in these "life ethic" principles of excellence and endeavour, transmitting the idea that attending prestigious private schools that takes only the *crème de la crème* can be a hard, stressful, and sometimes frustrating experience they have to deal with, at this moment, in order to be prepared to assume, in the future, positions of economic, social, political and symbolic power. Indeed, parents don't ignore that teachers adapt their level of exigency to the user level (Dubet and Duru-Bellat, 2000) and that high expectations also carry high levels of rigor on tests and on evaluation criteria and, consequently, lower grades than those got by students enrolled in less rigorous and selective schools. Due to the stigma and fear of downward mobility associated with academic failure, these parents help them to respond positively to their frustration with school classifications, explaining to them that it is more important to achieve knowledge in a prestigious school than to achieve high performances in a disreputable one:

> "We try to show him that the easygoing attitude is one of the bigger temptations of modern society: the idea that everything is easy and quick to get, that the success is achieved in just one step… He has to understand that life is a hard "marathon" and that achieving knowledge for real, even if with lower grades, is what matters" (mother, religious school, 42 years old).

Parental support and advantaged background in terms of economic, social and cultural status are strong predictors of children's future-oriented behaviours (Trommsdorff, 1983) – a premise confirmed by these students who "define their goals at an early age" (Head of secular secondary school) and who project long-term and successful academic careers.[7] Such ambitious projects require a "deep knowledge of the subjects" (student, religious school, 17 years old) and an "ascetic work ethic" that includes respecting good order and discipline inside classrooms and working hardly, as they do: 58% are punctual, assiduous and diligent and 27% do their best at school, although only a low percentage of them (9%) do really enjoy lessons' work. To be or not to be pleased with classroom activities is not as important as preparing future

> "Are you wondering if I like classes? I would not say I do. Classes
> (…) are the best way to enter university and labour market" (student,
> religious school, 17 years old)

> "We are here to do a long-term investment" (student, secular school,
> 15 years old).

Students developing an instrumental approach to knowledge and prestigious schools are not expected to be very sensible to the relational dimension of the educational environment (Barrère, 2002). However, these school communities assign a great importance to this dimension, recognizing its powerful effect on academic achievement. In fact, they support students' social integration in school and their sense of belonging, conveying the image of school metaphor as a "second family". The religious institution defines itself as "a big family whose main goal is to educate children entrusted to its care" (School Mission Statement: 25) and the secular one as an educational community with "a team spirit held in affection" (School Mission Statement: 2). Immersed in these supportive school cultures since nursery, the majority of students (73.5%) consider their own institution as a second family. This expressive percentage allow us to confirm the public image of these private schools as institutions with "(…) a guideline closer to a domestic system because it inspires a familial

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[7] According to our survey to students in these two private schools, their academic expectations are to complete a PhD (34%), a Post-Doc (33%) or a Master (20%) in prestigious universities and areas, like Economics (29%), Engineer (12%) and Medicine (11%)

ethos" (Estêvão, 2001, p. 306). Schools events, such as "Family Parties", Teachers-Students Weekends or Annual Trips, and ceremonies, as School Entrance ones and School Awards ones, create and maintain strong affiliations among all school members (Bear *et al.,* 1989), building an *esprit de corps*:

> "The idea that this school is a family, as people often say… I think these events intensify these connections… it helps a lot… to talk with teachers not only inside classes but also in other contexts" (student, religious school, 17 years old).

This sense of belonging is also fostered day by day, through the personalized attention to students, who are seen as individuals with an idiosyncratic personality, a family background and a set of life experiences. So, they are not mere "numbers" without identity, "it is not the 342. It is Miguel who has a family, expectations…" (Head of religious secondary school). Some staff members feel themselves as "second parents" and talk about their concern not only with students' academic achievement, but also with their well-being. One member of the auxiliary staff of secular school told us:

> "We handle with them as if we were taking care of our own children (…) and every day they kiss me when they come in, so I believe I have created very strong affective ties within this institution".

The Headmaster of religious school reports one of the main philosophical principles of Jesuits: the "cura personnalis", that is to say, the care for the entire person and the individual attention to students who shall be "loved and caressed" (alumni, 62 years old).

Briefly, although some variation introduced by catholic vs. republican ideology, these two private schools (re)produce a very strict and coherent circuit, composed by students' privileged background, high academic scores, a strong internal community, an emphasis on the formation of virtuous citizens, a sense of distinction towards public schools, and future access to prestigious social and economic positions.

Pedro Abrantes & Maria Luisa Quaresma

The public schools in poor areas

From our research with schools included in the TEIP program, two cases were selected and, in order to assure anonymity, we decided to name them as "the yellow setting" and "the blue setting". Although different in many aspects, both cases reflect the intimate connections between schools instability, tension and depression with urban segregation, concentration of social problems and stigmatization of some territories (Warren, 2005; Anyon, 2005).

The yellow setting includes three schools and it is located in an excluded neighbourhood of the Southern border (the other side of the Tagus river), with some characteristics of a ghetto. It was a "nowhere land", hardly accessible, where many people built illegal houses, in the 70s and 80s, partially replaced by social housing in the 90s. The schools are new, buildings and equipment are suitable, and the rate of students/professional is lower than the national average. However, our survey to parents confirmed that most students live in poor conditions.[8] Retention affected more than 1/5 of students each year and dropout rates were rough. The scores in national examination (from 2010) have shown very low academic performances: in K-6, only 15% achieve a positive evaluation in Math and 47% in Portuguese; in K-9, these values decreased to 3% and 21%.

The blue setting is composed of eight schools and it presents a distinct scenario. It was a rural area in the western suburbs of Lisbon, twenty kilometres away from the city centre, until it was informally occupied by many families returning from Africa, after the colonies independence (1974-75). Recently, with the growth of the urban area, cheap housing was built in this area, and many young families have settled there. Average students' life conditions are not so poor than in the other setting, but there are many conflicts and exclusions, due to high social inequality and cultural

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[8] For instance, in 2011, 73% of the parents only attended basic education, 32% were unemployed, 53% were service or factory workers, and 17% were immigrants. Concerning their households, 22% of the students lived only with their mothers and 34% in complex arrangements (including more than one family in the same household). 40% of the households included five or more people and 77% declared to live with a monthly income lower than 712 euros.

diversity, as well as lack of urban planning and weak community structures[9].

In this setting, some schools are deteriorated, overcrowded and work with few assistants (only 1 per 49 students, in the whole setting), so insecurity is a common complaint among teachers, students and parents. Although academic performances in the first six schooling years are near the national average, they decrease in the third stage (K-7 to K-9), so that 22% of students are retained; in K-9, only 18% achieve a positive score in the Math exam, as well as 48% in the Portuguese one. Since there are other public schools with better conditions nearby, socially advantaged parents tend to avoid this setting, seen as danger. In contrast, poor families are not accepted in other school settings or their incomes and schedules do not allow taking their children to schools in other districts and getting their back, in a daily basis.

As observed in the interviews and through informal talks with teachers and students, socialization in both contexts is dominated by a "sense of deprivation" and by a shared notion of being located in a "borderline" school and context. Still, there are some differences. In the yellow setting, such notion is associated with a territory submerged in poverty and exclusion, so that many students do not hold any future perspectives. Most teachers justify the low academic achievements and the violence problems with the poverty and de-structuration of students' families (the case of the gypsy families being the most evident). In the blue setting, such detachment is mostly linked to the poor schooling conditions. Many teachers criticize the contemporary society, the Ministry of Education, and/or the school board, in order to explain the academic scores and violence patterns. Acknowledging (directly or in television) the recent improvements in many public schools, students also pointed out their inconformity with school conditions.

> "At school, we would like to have more things, for example a computers room, to access internet during the free time, a music room where we could play without disturbing the other classes, a good library, a room with games and films, a covered field to play sports when it is raining" (student, blue setting, 10 years old).

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[9] According to the survey to parents, in 2011, 69% of the students' families were composed by husband, wife and one or two children. The rate of graduated parents was low, though in line with the Portuguese adult population. Still, 51% lived with less than 712 euros/month, 23% were unemployed and 21% were foreigners.

According to the survey, in both cases, most parents acknowledge boards' and teachers' work, associating their children low performances to the lack of study or to an inability to understand some subjects. Supported by the TEIP project, both school settings developed some organizational strategies during the last years to tackle their problems. They implemented pedagogical systems to reinforce learning patterns, especially in Math and in Portuguese, and they created special offices where teachers, psychologists and social workers analyze, follow and guide students identified as unruly, unmotivated and failing.

Especially in the yellow setting, an integrative strategy was taking place, based on artistic projects, vocational courses and partnerships with local institutions. Still, the relations established with the community were mainly formal and institutional, hardly pervading the informal ties (Warren, 2005). Meanwhile, in the blue setting – where the sense of a community remained weak and vague – the work was focused on the individual support to some students and families, as well as in the improvement of "surveillance technologies" (Kupchik and Monahan, 2006).

> "The former headmaster, I liked him, he could handle the kids… he was more authoritative. But he didn't allow parents to intervene in school (…) Currently, there is a great openness, the headmaster and the staff try always to help us and actually they are supporting us to form a parents' association" (student's father, yellow setting).

> "TEIP program allowed fostering the work of the previous indiscipline commission, an embryo of the current GAAF [Office of Support to Students and Families]. Before, there was not a systematic file and our intervention was just a reaction, usually a sanction, exclusively based in the issues of violence and indiscipline. Nowadays (…) we have a more integrative action: systematic records, playground surveillance, problematic students followed by tutors, more attention paid to family issues, and more openness to support parents in other important questions, not just the academic path of their children" (Headmaster of the blue setting).

Official data, as well as the survey to parents and teachers, show that these strategies generated more regulated schooling environments, reducing the levels of absenteeism and violence. While in the blue setting, an improvement of academic performances is also evident; this was not the

case in the yellow one. Still, one shall consider that some of those students today failing in the national examinations (especially, in K-9) would dropout earlier, in the recent past.

> "In the past, drubbing was more common than today (…) concerning drubbing kind of stuff, it is better now; now concerning the activities, we do nothing here" (student, yellow setting, 14 years old).

Therefore, schools in these contexts are increasingly conceived as spaces of inclusion, security and sociability, regarding the lack of other (safe) places for young people in these communities. There is a growing conception – and organizational structures – for a more integrative and encompassing view of the students, as children and adolescents, with their own needs and talents, involved in specific family and community contexts. Repression, retention and sanctions tend to be replaced by "soft procedures", as individual follow-up, support and orientation. Still, there is a dominant sense that academic success is unexpected in these contexts. And insofar, the schools intervention is focused on integrating, adjusting and guiding individual cases, hardly producing structural shifts in the relation between schools and communities (Warren and Mapp, 2011).

As noted with similar programs in France (Van Zanten 1990; Bourdieu and Champagne, 2003; Benabou, Kramarz, and Prost 2004) or in Great Britain (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe, 1995; Power and Grawitz, 2001), the TEIP impacts in local socialization dynamics tend to be ambivalent. On the one side, it is valued by local agents as a privilege and a stimulus to struggle against exclusion mechanisms and deprivation circles. This was especially notorious in the yellow setting. On the other side, as seen in the blue one, it is simultaneously felt as a label that hardly solves the real problems and actually may contribute to the segregation of schools and of their agents.

Conclusions

Although diversity was found within contexts, stressing that each school is a unique combination of multiple factors, the schools under analysis reflect current educational inequalities. On the one hand, there are selective private schools restricted to families with high levels of economic, cultural

and social capitals that believe these schools are providing a superior education; on the other hand, we find TEIP schools located in the poorest areas, restricted to families socially marginalized and with few resources. Each one generates a specific "schooling circuit" with its "contextualized ethic", as well as particular (asymmetric) resources, experiences and opportunities (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe, 1995; Ball and Van Zanten, 1998).

In the first ones, the ideal of excellence in all domains of life dominate the conceptions of school: a "total socializing project" is pursued in order to provide elites the required multidimensional education. Students are future-oriented and share high expectations over their academic and professional career. Therefore, they are deeply involved in school tasks, working hard in order to occupy an elite position. In the second ones, the main concern is to foster students' integration, preventing school failure, dropping-out and violence. A "partial socializing project" is pursued in these schools. Most of their students are present-oriented children who neither make a real investment in their academic career nor share high level expectations for future. This is feasibly one of the major threats to the claim that the educational system shall enhance to all children the right to equal opportunities, included in the national Constitution.

In spite of the gaps between these two educational sectors – namely concerning students' social background, available resources, enrolment in classroom and daily school activities and expectations towards the future – both believe in the potentialities of an integrative strategy to enhance learning engagement and success: the elite schools develop it through the dissemination of the ideal of "second family" reinforced by the promotion of leisure and cultural activities enrolling all the scholarly community; the TEIP schools through artistic projects, partnerships with local institutions and individual support.

Actually, concerning the organizational strategy – and the (official) meanings of school – there are important similarities. In the four cases, there is a double concern, both with: (a) the improvement of learning patterns, especially in Mathematics and Portuguese Language, in order to increase school scores in national exams; (b) the social integration of students, through a sense of well-being and the incorporation of moral virtues. In both cases, national curricula are mostly naturalized and taken as something not necessarily meaningful, interesting or contextualized, but important to students' adult path. Still, while in private schools the amount of resources allows to orient such strategy towards a "sense of distinctiveness" (Bourdieu, 1979) shared by board, teachers, students and

parents (and including mechanisms to exclude those who do not pursue it), in TEIP schools, "deprivation cycles" and structural instabilities contribute to a scenario where such orientation is only shared by a segment of teachers and students, and organizational strategies are oriented towards inclusion and safety.

Further research is requested, in particular, to identify and to analyze other "schooling circuits", as well as to understand its relation with social (and territorial) structuration. As noted before, both private and public schools in Portugal are notably heterogeneous, regarding publics, cultures, strategies and achievements (Estêvão, 2001; Diogo, 2008; Abrantes, 2008; Sebastião, 2009). Therefore, if one enlarges our research scope, the dual concept of the educational system arisen from our article shall be replaced by a mosaic landscape.

The analytical scope shall also be increased through a comparison with other situations in Europe. Based on research in different countries (see theoretical framework), our hypothesis is that, despite historical differences, differentiation of "educational circuits" is the expected result of both marketization and inclusion pressures in most countries. Still, the borderlines of such circuits (private/state; academic/vocational; national/local; etc.) – as well as their link to social inequalities – may vary considerably.

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