Private higher education in Argentina A circuit for reproducing inequalities?

Jaime Aragón Falomir, Santiago Andrés Rodriguez

Private Universities and Inequalities in the Global South

Under the direction of

Etienne GÉRARD

Private Universities and Inequalities in the Global South

Under the direction of

Etienne GÉRARD

Institut de recherche pour le Développement (France)
etienne.gerard@ird.fr

Acknowledgements

This work is based on the book published in French in 2023 by Éditions Khartala (Paris) under the title "Universités privées : la fabrique des inégalités. Leçons d'Afrique, d'Amérique latine et d'Asie", edited by Etienne Gérard. This book is the result of a two-year research project on "private higher education and inequality", conducted in all the countries listed her.

We would like to thank all the higher education institutions that opened their doors to us, in all the countries involved in this research, and the students, teachers and directors of private universities who gave up their time to help us with our surveys. This book would not have been possible without their invaluable assistance.

Rigas Arvanitis, Odile Hoffmann, Yann Lebeau, Laurence Proteau, Bernard Schlemmer and Anne-Catherine Wagner read and commented on this publication. We are infinitely grateful to them.

The skills and constant availability of Agnès Guillaume and Nolwen Henaff were essential in editing the earlier French edition of the book. Eric Opigez produced the cartography. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to them.

We would like to extend our warmest thanks to the Centre Population Développement (Ceped - Université de Paris Cité/Institut de Recherche pour le Développement), the Fédération Sciences Sociales Sud (F3S, IRD, Paris) and the Omer laboratory (Observer les mondes en recomposition) of the Institut de recherches en sciences sociales of the Université de Liège for their active support in the publication of this book.

We are grateful to the Agence Française de Développement (AFD, Paris) and the European Union for their substantial support for the ESPI project (Private Higher Education and Inequalities), of which this book is the result. Their participation was decisive in producing the research results presented here.

Finally, we would like to thank Keith Hodson of Accent Europe for proofreading the translation from French to English.

Table of contents

3

Private higher education in Argentina

A circuit for reproducing inequalities?[66]

Jaime ARAGÓN FALOMIR and Santiago Andrés RODRÍGUEZ

Summary

This chapter discusses whether the prevalent representation of education as an equaliser of opportunity and social improvement is still relevant in Argentina or whether it has been transformed by thirty years of private education development. Argentina prohibits for-profit higher education, while the country has neither very low-quality private institutions nor institutions owned by multinational consortia. After contextualising inequality in the Argentinean social structure, the authors propose a quantitative analysis of the typologies of private higher education institutions before analysing the role played by the institution and the family in the academic trajectories of students in a private higher education institution for upper-class students in Buenos Aires. Based on empirical research and quantitative analysis, this chapter highlights the social construction of private higher education in Argentina and the differentiation mechanisms at work in this sector. Students' personal experiences at one of the most prestigious private universities based on their decisions, expectations, and perceptions reveal 'circuits of inequality' linked to their social origin. The different mechanisms of social distinction work through the underlying structure of private higher education circuits and mechanisms, which contribute to the (re)production of social inequalities.

[66] This chapter is based primarily on data collected as part of the ESPI (Private Higher Education and Inequalities) project. It was written with the assistance of Etienne Gérard.

Introduction[67]

The 21st century has seen a proliferation of studies on social inequality (Piketty 2013 and 2019; Wilkinson and Pickett 2019), particularly in Latin America, one of the most unequal regions in the world (the Gini index[68] for this region is 0.46, compared with 0.32 for 'developed' countries and 0.45 in Africa) (Oxfam 2015). In order to contribute to this debate, this contribution is geographically limited to one of the most unequal countries in the world. "Argentina, with a Gini index of 0.41 (Busso and Messina 2020: 51). This statement needs to be qualified, however, as the country spent part of the 20th century on a pendulum swing, between civilian (democratic) and military (dictatorial) governments, crisis and economic growth, with levels of development that place it between the European indicators and below the Latin American averages.

The specialist literature recognises multiple dimensions of inequality: socio-economic, territorial, gender, educational, racial or ethnic, among others. In order to delineate these analytical dimensions, we will focus on the education sector, in which institutions classify individuals and reproduce the hierarchies and divisions of the social world, between capital-rich and capital-poor classes (Bourdieu 1979: 451 and 546).

In Argentina, a body of recent research has sought to analyse the impact of inequalities in terms of trajectories according to socio-economic and educational capital (Kaplan and Piovani 2018), graduation or dropping out of school (García de Fanelli 2015; Adrogué et al. 2019), social representations of the quality of educational provision (Tuñón and Halperin 2010), or even in terms of inter-generational educational mobility (Jorrat 2016; Dalle et al. 2018). The results of these studies point to an increase in inequality of opportunity in terms of educational success at university level: people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds face greater obstacles in gaining access to higher education, staying there and obtaining qualifications.

Research into the history of Argentine universities (Buchbinder 2005; Míguez 2018) has focused on privately managed institutions (del Bello et

[67] We would like to thank all the students who agreed to take part in the interviews. We would also like to thank the specialists who shared their valuable comments with us, in particular Osvaldo Barsky, María Guillermina D'Onofrio and Leticia Miras. Finally, we would like to thank Inès Ichaso for her support with the fieldwork.

[68] The Gini index (or coefficient) is a synthetic indicator of the level of inequality for a given variable and population. It varies between 0 (perfect equality) and 1 (extreme inequality). Between 0 and 1, the higher the Gini index, the greater the inequality. It is equal to 0 in a situation of perfect equality where the variable takes an identical value across the whole population. At the other extreme, it is equal to 1 in the most unequal situation possible, where the variable has a value of 0 for the entire population with the exception of a single individual. Inequalities measured in this way can relate to variables such as income, wages, standard of living, etc. Source: INSEE [https://www.insee.fr/fr/metadonnees/definition/c1551].

al. 2007; Barsky et al. 2016), exploring the public policies that have favoured their growth (Balán and García de Fanelli 1997; Pérez Rasetti 2014) and their quality and research standards (Adrogué et al. 2019). Still others have focused on studying equity in access to and graduation from these institutions (Adrogué et al. 2019).

However, this literature has given little attention to the relationship between inequality and private higher education, which is the subject of this paper. On the one hand, we will establish an unprecedented quantitative configuration of Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) by means of a Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), an analytical technique that groups together different variables to reveal a graphical representation of the distribution and position of private institutions in the university sector. The use of MCA allows us to go beyond observing "one variable at a time, as is customary, since we run the risk of attributing to one of the variables (for example, gender or age, which may *express in their own way* the situation as a whole or the future of a class) the effect of all the variables..." (Bourdieu 1979: 117). Thus, the positions of institutions are grouped according to their relationship of homology or similarity (proximity) and difference (distance), making it possible to analyse them by cluster (Bourdieu 1979: 141-142). We will also analyse student representations on the basis of qualitative surveys carried out as part of the *Private Higher Education and Inequalities* project, which forms the basis of this book (Aragón Falomir and Rodríguez 2020)[69].

We will endeavour to show how and where these "unequal academic circuits" materialise Their identification is essential for understanding the elements that distinguish different social strata according to their socio-economic resources. These 'unequal academic circuits' refer to 'differentiated academic niches (with defined characteristics), which are appropriated by different sectors ('classes') of the population' (Saraví 2019: 296). We will seek to understand the extent to which actors play a particular role in shaping differentiated perceptions of private higher education. The intersection of the two approaches, quantitative and qualitative, will enable us to analyse the space of private higher education in Argentina 'in terms of relations' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 72). Our main sources will be in-depth interviews, official sources on education (CONEAU, SPU, CRUP) and data on the socio-economic conditions of the Argentine population (NBI or 'poverty rate')[70].

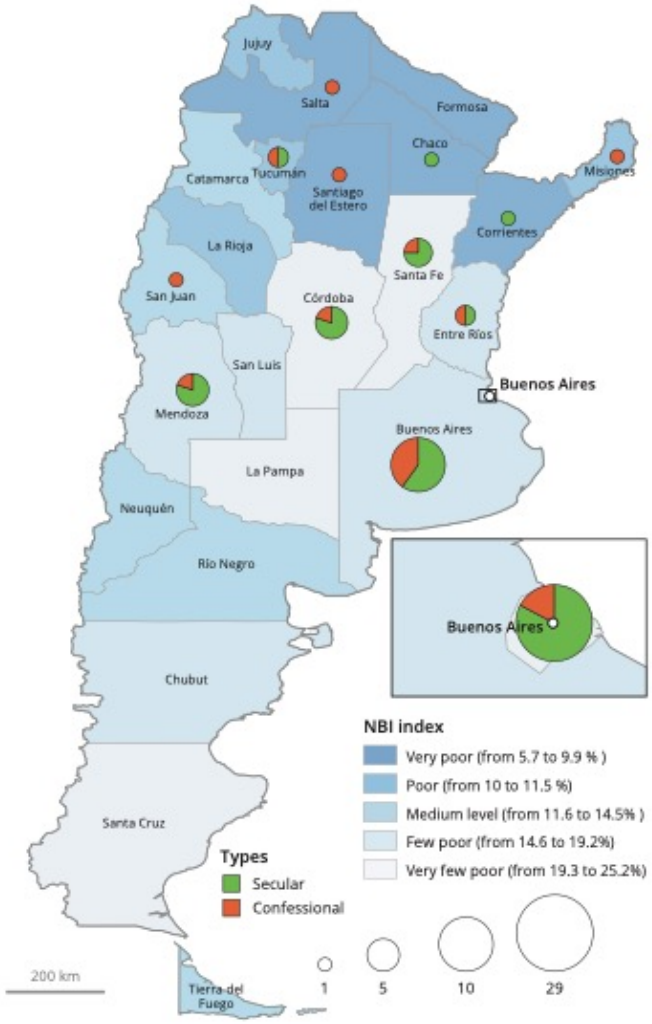
[69] These representations are drawn from qualitative surveys carried out as part of the *Private Higher Education and Inequalities* project. A total of 60 interviews were conducted during August 2019, about half with authorities or lecturers and half with students from private higher education institutions.

[70] The NBI (Necesidades basicas insatisfechas - Unsatisfied Basic Needs) groups together different indicators linked to basic structural needs such as the type of housing (sanitary conditions, overcrowding), education (school attendance) or household size (households with more than four people), among others (INDEC 1984).

This text is divided into three parts. In the first, we explore and contextualise the issue of (in)equality(ies) in the Argentine social structure. The second part will be devoted to a quantitative analysis of the typologies of Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) using a combination of two multivariate analysis techniques: MCA and clustering. In the third part, based on qualitative information collected in our surveys, we will look at the role played by the institution and the family in the university careers of students at a private higher education institution for upper-class education.

It is important to point out that this research was concentrated in the Argentine capital (Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, CABA). Although it has a significant demographic weight (one third of the country's population), this region is far from representative of all the provinces in terms of university space: for example, public spending per student is $8,000 there, whereas it is only $3,200 in a province like San Juan (Cristia and Pulido 2020: 186). On the other hand, as Map 3.1 shows, IESPs are concentrated in CABA and the more economically developed central provinces of the country (Córdoba, Santa Fe, Entre Ríos and Mendoza).

Map 3.1 *Number and proportion of private secular and denominational universities in 2010.*



Source: INDEC-Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010 - Dirección General de Estadística y Censos (Ministerio de Hacienda GCBA), EAH 2010. Production: E. Opigez, IRD-Ceped-Projet ESPI.

On the contrary, there are proportionately fewer private universities in the poorer northern provinces (with high NBI rates), and none in the richer southern provinces (with low NBI rates). Finally, the distribution of the types of private universities, both secular and denominational, is differentiated territorially: while secular universities are largely dominant in CABA, provinces such as Salta, San Juan and Misiones have only denominational higher education institutions.

In the provinces with medium and low NBI (south and centre), 9% of the population aged 20 and over have higher education qualifications, which is close to the national average of 8% (CABA stands out with a high rate of 21%). In regions where the NBI is high (north), the average percentage of the population with higher education falls to 5%. Access to higher education is therefore marked by a significant territorial divide, particularly in areas hit by major economic difficulties (INDEC 2010).

The social construction of inequality in Argentina

Social structure and (in)equality in Argentina

The *World Inequality Database* (WID) report shows that, in the midst of an economic crisis since 2018, Argentina appears to be continuing to benefit from the redistributive public policies implemented by the governments of Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007) and his wife Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2011, 2011-2015). According to the WID (2020), the country's indicators are close to those of OECD countries in various areas: in 2019, the most disadvantaged half (50%) of the population benefited from 17.9% of GDP (10.8% in 2000), a proportion close to that of Germany (19%) or France (22%), but much higher than that of a country like Mexico (8.6%). At the same time, the most privileged social stratum (10th decile) controlled 39.5% of GDP in 2018 (49% in 2000), a higher proportion than the same stratum in France (32.1%), but 10% lower than in Latin America as a whole, and almost 20% lower than in Mexico (60%). In terms of the distribution of national wealth between the different social strata, Argentina is therefore at the same level as the European countries, ahead of the Latin American countries, with a promising first decade of the 21st century. How can this situation be explained?

The progressive construction of the social structure provides an initial response. According to Dalle (2012: 88), two stages can be distinguished: first, structural upward mobility towards the middle classes during the economic development of the agro-exporting model combined with the wave of European immigration (1870 à 1930). Secondly, social mobility marked by the formation of a "consolidated working class" during the expansion of import-substituting manufacturing (*Industrialización por sustitución de importaciones)* (1930-1976).

Although in 1870 Argentina was the fourth largest exporter in Latin America (behind Brazil, Cuba and Mexico), the formation of the modern agri-export sector from 1880 onwards was decisive in ensuring the country's steady growth until 1913. As a result, Argentina became the region's leading exporter at the beginning of the 20th century (Barsky and Gelman 2001: 165). The growth of its GDP meant that the country could be considered one of the most prosperous at the time, on a par with Australia and Canada, to the point where it seemed capable of playing the role of the United States in South America (Alvaredo 2010: 254). But these capital flows were closely linked to strong external demand for commodities (wool and meat, wheat and maize) and the country remained dependent on foreign currency. Moreover, the current model of economic fragility is still the result of this process (Barsky and Gelman 2001; Atilio 2006: 53). Education benefited from these years of prosperity: public investment was very substantial, amounting to 31% of the budget in 1935, compared with 27% in Germany, 17% in Chile and 9% in Italy (Etcheverry 2000: 57).

These elements linked to industrialisation gave rise to the formation of the working class (1930-1970), the basis for the emergence and consolidation of the middle classes (Palomino 1989: 11). Economic, industrial, demographic and urban growth triggered a remarkable expansion of the middle classes, which in 1947 represented 40% of the population. Some authors have pointed out that Argentina had greater "fluidity" than European societies (Germani 1955: 224). At the end of the Second World War, however, the country underwent a relative decline, which was offset by the redistributive policies of Juan D. Perón's first government (1946-55), which were more extensive than in the United States, Australia or France (Alvaredo 2010: 253).

"Peronism' sought to reverse social backwardness by stimulating industrial development, popular mobilisation and the centrality of the state (Aragón 2021: 2; Souroujon and Lesgart 2021: 55). The inertia of these policies lasted until 1976, when the 'growth of marginality' (Torrado 1992) emerged, reaching its peak in 2001, with 57.5% of the population living below the poverty line (Zelaya 2012: 182). As a result, the middle classes grew stronger during the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, before disintegrating in recent decades.

Argentina is a particularly interesting case study, as it is atypical in three respects. On the one hand, it allows us to observe a developed country “that underwent a period of growth with the capacity to invest in education, leading to, among other things, social mobility and the construction of a middle class (unprecedented in the region). On the other hand, political instability (military interventions) and poor macroeconomic decisions have led to a decline in the middle classes. Finally, despite economic crises (the hyperinflation of 1989 and the economic, political and social crises of 2001), the country has managed to maintain stable equality indicators, with a Gini index fluctuating between 0.46 and 0.48 (Alvaredo 2010: 256). What about education?

Highly (in)egalitarian access to higher education in Argentina

Latin America has succeeded in generalising access to primary education, but there are major disparities at university level, in terms of access, the type and 'quality' of school attended by different social groups, the number of graduates, drop-out rates and the ability of different institutions to retain students (Cristia and Pulido 2020: 167).

In Argentina, the average length of study is 12 years, one of the longest in the region (Neidhöfer Serrano and Gasparini 2018: 332), and the country has one of the best-performing public higher education systems (Arias et al., 2017), despite the many criticisms levelled at it (Míguez 2018; Aragón 2020). Disparities in access to higher education are also decreasing. The proportion of 18- to 23-year-olds from the lowest quintile enrolled in higher education rose from 25% in 1998 to 62% in 2014 (Arias et al. 2017: 204).

However, as in most countries in the region, the level of family income continues to determine the type (and quality) of educational establishment attended (Aragón Falomir and Rodríguez 2020). According to Neidhöfer et al. (2018: 334), almost 70% of individuals born between 1940 and 1990 are better educated than their parents (inter-generational educational mobility) and those born between 1945 and 1960 who have a university education have an income 4.4 times higher than their uneducated counterparts (social mobility through education). However, this mobility conceals abysmal disparities: while 58.2% of children of parents with tertiary qualifications obtain a tertiary qualification ("persistence upwards"), 55.6% of those whose parents have a low level of education do not obtain a tertiary qualification ("persistence downwards"). Furthermore, the proportion of those enrolled in higher education whose parents do not have this level of education is only 13.9% (table 3.1).

Table 3.1 *Children's level of education as a function of parents' level of education (percentages).*

		Parents' level of education		
		Low	Medium	Superior
Childrens' level of education	Low	55.6	34.0	10.4
	Medium	29.7	38.7	31.6
	Superior	13.9	27.9	58.2

Source: Authors, based on Neidhöfer *et al* (2018: 336).

Data from the survey on stratification and social mobility in Argentina (CEDOP-UBA, 2007-2008) jointly indicate that 26.4% of students from working-class households go on to higher education, while 57.6% of those from upper-class households do so. Inequalities are therefore a matter of reproduction (Neidhöfer et al. 2018: 336). Inequalities in access to higher

education are further compounded by unequal use of the public and private education sectors by different social classes. The majority of university students come from households in the fourth- and fifth-income quintiles, with the latter two groups accounting for 65% of enrolments in the university system as a whole. At the other extreme, only 16% of students come from low-income households (first and second quintiles). And this distribution is even more unequal in private universities: in public universities, students from the highest-income households (fifth quintile) make up 29% of the total student population; in private universities, 55%. Moreover, in the private sector, 80% of students come from households in the fourth- and fifth-income quintiles, and only 8% from households in the first and second quintiles.

Table 3.2 *Distribution of university enrolments by sector and income quintile (percentages).*

	Proportion of students in each quintile in the total, by sector				Proportion of students in each sector in the total, by quintile		
	Public	Private	Total		Public	Private	Total
I	5	2	5	I	92	8	100
II	11	6	10	II	90	10	10
III	22	12	20	III	90	10	100
IV	33	25	32	IV	87	13	100
V	29	55	33	V	72	28	100
Total	100	100	100		83	17	100

Source: Based on Del Bello et al. (2007).

The Roman numerals represent the quintile (one fifth) of the total population, in ascending order from low-income students (I) to high-income students (V), *in* Aragon Falomir & Rodriguez (2020: 29).

Thus, relative participation in private universities increases for the highest income quintiles, throughout the country and for all provinces. This distribution is borne out by other studies, in particular the survey of people aged 25-64 on stratification and social mobility in Argentina in 2007-08 (CEDOP- UBA 2007-08).

The axiom that public schools should be attended by the upper classes and public schools by the lower classes does not hold true in the case of Argentina. When it comes to education, Argentina is somewhere between Latin America and Europe, with a higher education system that is both inclusive and marked by major inequalities.

These data show the strong relationship between a household's economic and educational capital and the educational trajectory of its members, and highlight the strong reproduction of inequalities as a function of this capital. What role does the private higher education sector play in this process? Can it be identified as an area that provides access to higher education for people who would otherwise have no right to it? This question is due to the growth in the number of students in the private sector, from 14.5% in 2003 to 21.5% in 2013 (Aragon and Rodriguez 2020: 27) and requires us to look at the social role of the institutions in this sector. To do this, we will look at the construction of the higher education system, in which the public sector was confronted with the emergence of the private sector from 1958 onwards.

Higher education in Argentina and political instability

In Argentina, since the end of the 19th century, the State has been responsible for creating, maintaining and regulating universities, as stipulated by the Avellaneda Law of 1885. Population growth in the early twentieth century meant that educational infrastructure had to be expanded. However, selective and elitist admission to universities prompted the student movement of 1918 to demand the freedom to teach and carry out research, to reject the clerical vision of higher education and to demand unrestricted admission to higher education. The so-called "university reform of 1918" was the product of these demands (Tunnermann 2008). For a variety of reasons, mainly political, these reforms were not fully implemented until 1945, when Juan D. Perón came to power. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, business sectors and Catholic religious congregations competed for higher education in order to train their managers (Algañaraz 2019: 278-279).

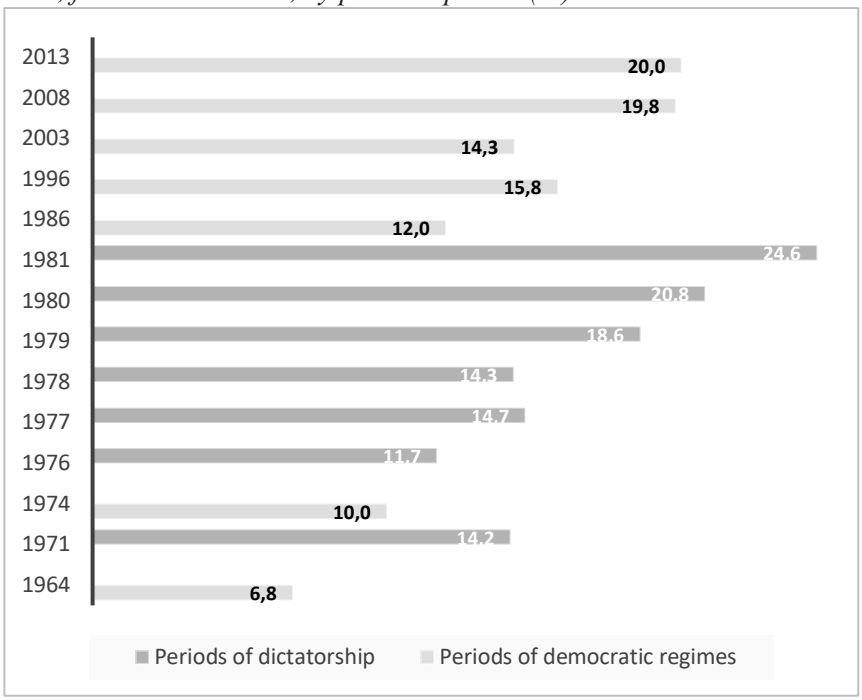
Against this backdrop of political tension, President Perón was overthrown by the military coup of the "Liberating Revolution" (1955-58) which sought, among other things, to demonopolise and 'de-Peronise' (*desperonizar*) education (Buchbinder 2005: 169). The new government signed decree no. 6403 in 1955 in favour of recognising private university degrees. However, the definitive authorisation to award degrees by the private sector was adopted under the government of Arturo Frondizi (1958-1962) with law 14.557/58 in 1958. Until then, the State had authorised the opening of private universities, but had not financed them - they were dependent on tuition fees - and had prohibited them from being profit-making, as the profits made had to be used for salaries and infrastructure.

According to Algañaraz (2019: 282-285), the next period, from 1958 to 1966, was one of 'regulated institutionalisation' of the private higher education sector, which would then give rise, from 1973 to 1983, to the 'regulated institutionalisation' of the private higher education sector.

The military junta imposed a "selective slowdown" on the expansion of this sector, due to the ban on setting up new institutions. During the first of

these two periods, 16 private higher education institutions, mainly ecclesiastical, were authorised. The 1962 coup d'état put an end to President Frondizi's term of office, while his successor Arturo Illia (1963-1966) was overthrown by the military junta of the "Argentine Revolution" (1966-1973). During this period, the growth of the IESPs slowed, with only five being created. When Juan D. Perón returned to Argentina in 1973, a new decree (17.604/67) established the State's responsibility to evaluate the processes, results and supervision of the private higher education sector. However, his death and a scenario of political instability led to another military coup and the "national reorganisation process", from 1976 to 1983, which was undertaken to regain control of the State. From 1974 to 1983, authorisation to open new establishments was suspended (Decree 451, see Del Bello et al., 2007).

Graph 3.1. *Change in the proportion of students enrolled in the private sector, from 1964 to 2013, by political period (%).*



Source: authors based on data from Algañaraz (2019: 290-293), Suasnábar & Rovelli (2011: 24), Adrogué et al. (2014: 75), Consejo de Rectores de Universidades Privadas de Argentina, Statistical Yearbooks (2004 and 2008), and Ministry of Education (2013).

The various dictatorships were, among other things, part of a struggle against the advance of left-wing political factions in the university, and in favour of teachers rallying to the vision promoted by the country's armed forces. 1976 ushered in a particularly authoritarian and repressive period for

the academic community. Numerous repressive interventions were carried out in public universities (Buchbinder 2005: 191), curricula and teaching programmes, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, were closed down, entrance examinations and quotas per course were imposed, and tuition fees were set (Algañaraz 2019: 298). Around two thousand teachers fled into exile (Orione 2008), while many others decided to take refuge in the private higher education sector. As a result, the number of students in the private sector rose during the dictatorship, before falling during the subsequent period of democracy (Balán and García de Fanelli 1997: 175). The previous graph illustrates this pendulum-like relationship between political instability and the private higher education sector.

The private higher education sector: between expansion, contraction and reduction

Before the end of the dictatorship (1983), only 20 IESPs were in operation, and they trained less than 20% of students - a misleading figure given the dictatorial situation (Balán and García de Fanelli 1997: 174). From 1983 onwards, Argentina returned to democracy, marking the longest period in its history without institutional changes. This return to democracy meant the reactivation of unrestricted admission to public higher education and free tuition, provoking a kind of counter-transfer from the private to the public sector. The number of students enrolled in the former grew only slightly (2.4%), while in the latter it rose sharply (19.4%) (Balán and García de Fanelli 1997: 184).

The presidency of Raúl Alfonsín, from 1983 to 1989, led to the expansion of the university system: student numbers rose and new courses and programmes were created, mainly in the public sector. However, his successor, Carlos Saúl Menem (1989-1999), favoured the expansion of new institutions (mainly private) and the expansion of existing institutions, which were representative of the period of deregulation of higher education (Gérard 2020: 11-13). Between 1989 and 1995,21 IESPs were authorised (19 universities and 2 institutes) and only 9 public institutions were created (del Bello et al. 2007: 99). According to Zelaya (2012: 188-189), this expansion of the private sector was in response to unmet demand from the middle and working classes in intermediate or small towns, who could not travel to the capitals to attend the national public universities. Moreover, this trend was encouraged, both by the State (Carlos Menem) and by the private entrepreneurs themselves (Pérez Rasetti 2014: 8).

Argentina's political evolution and social structure explain why the private higher education sector in Argentina is recent and still in the minority, with the public sector taking in the majority of students, unlike countries such as Chile, Brazil and Colombia, where the the state has mainly left this task [of higher education] in the hands of private initiative" (Balan and García de Fanelli 1993: 3). Although, according to Levy (1995), the

growth of IESPs in Latin America is due either to the decline in the quality of the public sector or to the inaccessibility of its institutions to the working classes, neither of these conditions is present in Argentina (García de Fanelli 1997: 40). The explanation for the current situation of the private sector and its expansion lies more in cyclical factors, including a reduction in state resources (which fell by 21.4% between 1980 and 1990), a growing demand for higher education, and bureaucratic inefficiency (Balan and García de Fanelli 1997: 178).

The field of private higher education in the light of a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA): complex organisation and dynamics

Successive policies have thus had a strong impact on the development of higher education and its private sector in opposite directions, between expansion on the one hand and contraction, or even reduction, on the other. To what extent have these contradictory trends been reflected in the organisation of the private higher education sector, and have they thus contributed to the production of inequalities at this level of education? Has the morphology of this private sector changed as a result of these different policies, involving, for example, differentiations in modes of access to higher education and social distinctions between the student populations of public and private higher education universities, and between private universities with each other? This question arises immediately in the light of these developments in the field of higher education; it is also essential in the search for factors influencing inequalities, particularly those produced by private higher education and the process of its structuring. These inequalities deserve to be investigated through all the variables linked to this organisation, and even more through the relationships between these variables. It is not enough, for example, to consider only the different conditions of access offered by the public and private sectors, but to assess all the factors at the root of any inequalities, such as the differences between institutions, their teaching supply, their study conditions, etc., in order to determine the extent of inequalities.

The current panorama of higher education is as follows: in 2018, the higher education sector comprised 66 public establishments (61 universities and 5 institutes), with 79% of the student body, and 63 private establishments (49 universities and 14 institutes), with 21% of the student body. This private sector, Algañaraz (2019: 280) points out, undergoes expansions and contractions due to forces endogenous to the university system (internal tensions) and exogenous (military intervention or religious pressures). The heterogeneity of the institutions is such that it makes it impossible to generalise about the private sector, and various authors have attempted to draw up typologies.

Zelaya (2019: 186) divides institutions into two groups: one aimed at training elites, the other at the middle and working classes. García de Fanelli (1997) distinguishes three subsets of private institutions: one, Catholic, a second, non-elitist entrepreneurial, and a third, high-level academic. Algañaraz (2019: 310-211) considers three types of institution: the first, traditional and prestigious; the second, modern and rising; and the third, socially marginal. Other authors identify four groups of private institutions: universities of research and excellence; those whose research activities are growing and which are engaged in a process of consolidation; those whose research strategies are erratic; and finally, those which give low priority to research processes (Barsky et al. 2016: 514-517).

From one typology to another, different differentiation criteria are used: either the legal nature of the institutions (secular or denominational), or the social sector they serve, or the level of training, or the stage of consolidation of the institutions. However relevant they may be, these different characteristics are most of the time considered separately and independently. As such, they fail to capture all the factors that differentiate institutions, the contemporary dynamics of the sector, and the dynamics of the field of private higher education. Two tools have proven to be particularly fruitful in bringing to light both the organisation of private higher education, the factors of differentiation between the units that compose it, and finally, the relationships between their different characteristics, at the basis of this organisation and the dynamics of the sector: multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) on the one hand, and the cluster method on the other.

Official sources such as those of the Ministry of University Policies (SPU, 2013, 2018), the National Commission for University Assessment and Accreditation (CONEAU, n.d.), the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET, n.d.), the Regional Higher Education Planning Councils (CPRES, n.d.), publications by the Council of Rectors of Private Universities (CRUP, n.d.), and recent research on private higher education in Argentina, provide essential data for tackling these issues. They also make it possible to explore in detail the structure of the private higher education sector through the construction of specific tools.

The main one used here is Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA). This is central to sociological research into social stratification and inequality, as Pierre Bourdieu showed in *La Distinction. Critique sociale du jugement* (1979) to analyse the tastes and lifestyles of social classes in France. ACM is a multivariate technique used for "dimensional reduction and the construction of perception maps". Perception maps are based on the association between objects and a set of descriptive characteristics or attributes specified by the researcher. Their most direct application is the representation of the "correspondence of categories of variables, particularly those measured on nominal measurement scales" (Hair et al. 1999: 571). The MCA extracts factors/dimensions that make it possible to synthesise the

structure of the associations between the group of variables (López Roldan and Fachelli 2015b).

Far from being homogeneous, the private higher education sector is marked by strong differentiation between its higher education institutions, based on a number of characteristics that have evolved over time and which give this field its current structure: the age of the institutions, their type (university or institute), their distribution (regional or national), their legal nature (secular or denominational), their size and dimension (single or multi-campus), their offer in terms of levels of training and courses of study, their degree of involvement in research, the extent of their official recognition, and the cost of studies. The MCA allows us to access the underlying structure of the private university sector in Argentina by considering this set of characteristics of private higher education institutions. Table 3.3 below describes the variables selected for this research and their categorisation systems.

The results of the MCA are thus deduced from a set of characteristics and their variations within the university sector, namely the "total variance" within the ACM. Two dimensions are taken into account: the proportion (in %) of this total variance 'absorbed' by the dimensions (or axes), and the absolute contributions of the categories of variables to the variation of these dimensions[71]. We also use the correspondence diagram, in which the axes (or dimensions) correspond to characteristics which may be common to certain sub-groups and which distinguish them from the others[72].

[71] See appendix for a detailed description of the ACM.

[72] Here, the two dimensions absorb 79.1% of the total variance. The first dimension, which is the most important axis, absorbs 62.2% of this variance and the second, the remaining 16.9%.

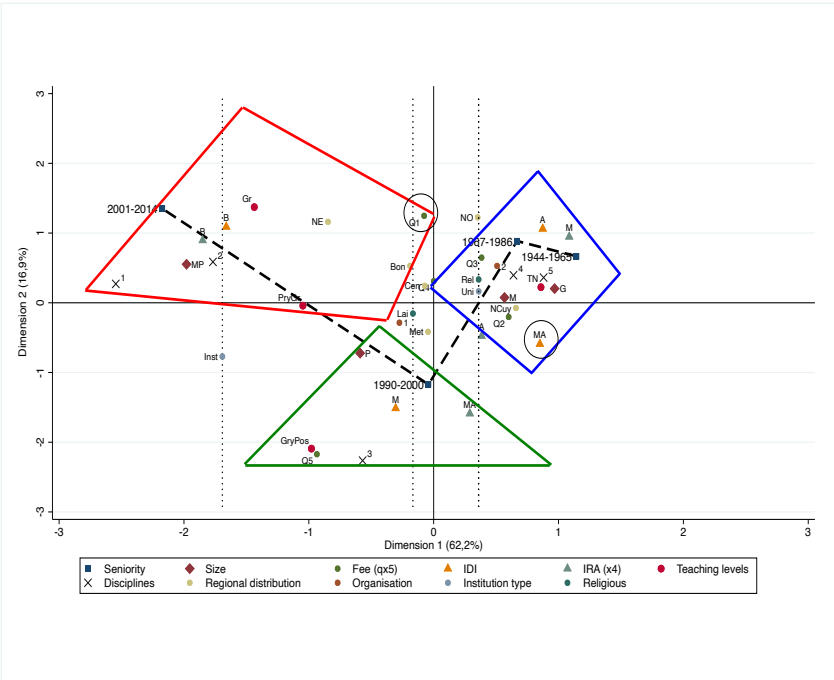
Table 3.3 *Description of MCA variables.*

Variables	**Definition**	**Categories**
Seniority	Periods of creation of IESPs (del Bello, Barsky & Giménez, 2007).	1. 1944-1965 2. 1967-1986 3. 1990-2000 4. 2001-2014
Type of institution (IT)	Institutes or universities (SPU, 2013 and 2018).	1. University institutes 2. Universities
Regional distribution (DR)	Regional distribution of PSNIs according to the CPRES proposal.	1. Metropolitan 2. Bonaerense 3. Centre 4. New Cuyo 5. Northeast 6. Northwest
Affiliation (AR)	Distinction between secular and religious PSIs (del Bello et al., 2007)	1. Secular 2. Confessional
Size	Size structure of institutions by number of undergraduate and postgraduate students (del Bello et al., 2007).	1. Very small (less than 1,000 students) 2. Small (between 1,000 and 3,000 students) 3. Resources (between 3,000 and 10,000 students) 4. Large (over 10,000 students)
Type of organisation	Distinction between IESPs that have curricula or campuses in several provinces (SPUs).	1. Unicampus 2. Multicampus
Levels of education offered (*Nivel educativo de oferta* - NEO)	Distinction between IESPs according to undergraduate and postgraduate courses (SPU).	1. Licence 2. Master's and PhD 3. Baccalaureate and licence 4. Bachelor's, Master's and PhD 5. All levels
Total number of courses o study (*Total de ramas de estudio* - TRE)	Study courses offered by higher education institutions.	1. a study pathway 2. Two streams 3. Three streams 4. Four streams 5. Five streams
Institutional Recognition and Accreditation Index (IRA)	Synthetic/proxy measure of the level of institutional recognition and accreditation of study programmes (Aragón Falomir & Rodríguez, 2020).	1. Bottom 2. Medium 3. High 4. Very high
Teaching and Research Index (*Índice de docencia e investigación* -IDI)	Synthetic measure of the level of commitment of institutions to research (Aragón Falomir & Rodríguez, 2020).	1. Bottom 2. Medium 3. High 4. Very high
Annual cost – in Argentinean $ - by quintiles	Cost of the licence for 2015 (Doberti & Gabay, 2016) adjusted.	1. Q1[73] 2. Q2 3. Q3 4. Q4 5. Q5

[73] Reference: minimum= $45,059; maximum= $338,697. Categories are ranked from lowest to highest.

The correspondence diagram (Figure 3.1) allows us to observe patterns of association between categories of variables: 'Proximity in space means "correlation" between categories, i.e. correspondences' (López Roldan and Fachelli 2015b: 2). In sum, the correspondence diagram makes it possible to account for the structure of the private university space in Argentina. The factorial space formed by the intersection of dimensions 1 and 2 captures this. The Cartesian axes divide the diagram into 4 quadrants that illustrate the differences between institutions. The categories of the seniority variable, linked by a dotted black line from 1944-1965 to 2001-2014, indicate a movement from the right-hand plane to the left-hand plane of the diagram, from the oldest to the most recent institutions. In general terms, the movement reflects the coexistence of different stages in the development of the private higher education sector in Argentina.

Figure 3.1. *Diagram of the ACM: structure of the private university sector.*



Active variables: seniority, size, cost (qx5), teaching and research index (IDI) (x4), institutional recognition and accreditation index (IRA) (x4), levels of education and courses of study. Additional variables: religious affiliation, regional distribution, type of institution and organisation.

Source: prepared by the authors.

The diagram first shows the different periods in the organisation of the higher education field: firstly, 1944-1965 and 1967-1986 (marked in blue in the top right-hand quadrant), which correspond respectively to the emergence of the initial core of private universities and the development of

the sector (1958-1966), and then the slowdown in the creation of new institutions (1966-1988) (del Bello et al. 2007).

In 1960, two years after the authorisation to set up private universities, 4 universities were founded. 12 private universities were set up between 1960 and 1966, either in conjunction with various Catholic congregations or with the business sector. Between 1966 and 1988, only 7 private universities were set up.

According to the variables 'type of institution' (Uni), 'religious affiliation' (Rel) and 'regional distribution' (Cen, No and NCuy), the field of private higher education is structured by Catholic universities that set up in the capitals of the most important provinces (e.g., Cordoba and Santa Fe) and then extended their presence in the interior of the country by creating establishments affiliated with the main headquarters (Algañaraz 2019). Del Bello et al. argue that "the dominant weight was held by Catholic entities with a long tradition in Argentine education, with provisional spaces in schools or buildings where philosophy or theology courses were already being taught" (2007: 91).

The range of education on offer was diversifying: medium-sized (M) and large (G) institutions coexisted (between 3,000 and 10,000 students and more than 10,000 students respectively); the levels of study were also expanding, from undergraduate to postgraduate (NT), and five courses of study were created. The field was not only structured, it was also consolidated: the links between teaching and research were affirmed (IDI = A), and processes for evaluating and accrediting courses were introduced (IRA = M).

These first two periods were followed by the 'great expansion of the sector' (1989-1995) and the 'regulated opening phase' (del Bello et al., 2007), which can be seen in the lower quadrant of the diagram, which shows the institutions created during the decade 1990-2000 (marked in green).

Between 1989 and 1995, 24 private institutions were created. The private higher education sector became more socially diversified: most of the new establishments created during this third wave of expansion in the sector benefited from demand from the middle and working classes, following a widespread process, particularly in Latin America[74]. Alongside them, there were also "institutions that fell into the category of 'secular elite' institutions because of their high tuition fees and the relatively greater weight of postgraduate studies and research" (del Bello et al. 2007: 101).

As a result of this development in the sector, the opening up of establishments was further regulated (Decree 2330/93, the antecedent of Law 24.521 on Higher Education of 1995 - LES - and Decree 576/96 on private universities). The higher education law extended the autonomy of these establishments and, at the same time, established more rigorous criteria for their authorisation to operate. Within this regulatory framework,

[74] See, for example, the text on Mexico in the same book.

CONEAU (the National Commission for University Assessment and Accreditation) was given the task of carrying out external assessments, accrediting undergraduate degrees and periodically accrediting specialisations, MMaster's degrees and PhDs, as well as granting permission for new institutions to open, taking into account the coherence and viability of their programmes (García de Fanelli 2016).

The application of this law and the regulatory decree (576/96) led to a slowdown in the creation of private institutions. Between 1996 and 1999, only 4 institutions were authorised to operate as university institutes: the Instituto Universitario CEMIC (1997), Dachary (1998), the Universidad ISALUD (1998) and the Escuela Superior de Economía y Administración de Empresas - ESEADE (1999). This is illustrated by the 'Inst' point (University Institutes) in the bottom left-hand quadrant of the diagram.

At the same time as this slowdown was taking place, the institutions were undergoing a process of concentration, their development was being more tightly regulated and their offerings more targeted. Most of them were established in the metropolitan region [Met] in the form of 'small' institutions (P) with between one and three thousand students, whose teaching supply tended to focus on the Bachelor's, specialisation, Master's and PhD (GryPos) levels, through three courses of study and a more rigorous accreditation process. Teaching programmes responded to the recommendations of external assessments, both of institutions and programme accreditations (IRA = MA), and their research activities gradually developed (IDI = M). CONEAU was undoubtedly responsible for their high level of institutional recognition and accreditation during this period (IRA).

The last characteristic period in the evolution of the private higher education sector, from 2001 to 2014 (top left quadrant of the diagram, outlined in red), marks the slowdown in its development, which began with the 2001 crisis: "the economic slowdown," noted Barsky et al. hit companies and enrolments in private universities. The rapid economic recovery from 2002 onwards led to an increase in available resources. [Private universities were [gradually] recovering their investment levels" (2016: 365).

Located in the Buenos Aires (Bon) and north-eastern (NE) regions of the country, these institutions are mostly "very small" in size (MP), and their educational supply is not very diversified, comprising pre-university[75] and Bachelor's degrees (PryGr) in two streams. Their orientation also differs from that of the institutions of the previous period:

"Some institutions," noted Barsky and Corengia, "particularly the most recently created, still have very strong priorities in terms of infrastructure consolidation, teaching and market insertion. This situation, combined with the lack of direct state funding for research, means that the introduction of these processes has had to be postponed" (2017: 44). They therefore focus

[75] *Pregrado*: this level corresponds to that of the baccalauréat, before entry to higher education.

their activities more on teaching than on research (IDI= B). Moreover, most of them operate under the provisional authorisation regime and, in general, do not include programmes accredited by CONEAU (IRA= B). As such, the latter institutional space largely falls within the category of 'marginalised institutions [...] with little recognition, disconnected from the rest of the circuit' (Algañaraz 2019: 311).

Examination of the different periods in the development of the private higher education sector thus reveals successive trends of expansion, slowdown, the geographical concentration of institutions, and different implementations of the sector's regulatory process. Cross-analysis of the characteristics of institutions from one period to the next, and within each period, reveals the increasing complexity of the field, and the growing heterogeneity of its institutions in terms of size, teaching provision, involvement in research, and the integration of different social fractions of students.

During the first two stages in the development of this private sector, the majority of students enrolled were from the middle classes (annual cost at undergraduate level = Q3). The period when the sector opened up and diversified, spurred on by the withdrawal of the state, saw the ranks of lower-middle class and working class students swell, before the slowdown in the creation of institutions and their tighter supervision benefiting the upper classes: during this period, the annual cost of tuition at undergraduate level corresponded to the highest quintile (Q5) and may reflect "the existence of circuits for the upper class within the Argentine education system" (Gessaghi 2016: 67). These 'circuits' are now being juxtaposed by new social spaces in the private higher education sector, as it diversifies and extends to lower-quality institutions that are also more precarious. The annual cost of a Bachelor's degree can therefore be relatively low, as the diagram shows (Q1), although the position of the universities near the centre of the diagram indicates a degree of heterogeneity in this respect. Alongside universities offering long courses of study, there are institutes offering pre-university courses (short courses), which cater mainly for students from the lower middle classes who enter the labour market at a younger age and are not in a position to pursue higher education courses of four years or more.

IESP in Argentina: typology test using the cluster method

A complementary statistical analysis enables us to characterise this typology of existing institutions and their differentiating variables in more detail, and to show how these institutions are distributed according to the different trends examined previously. The clustering method[76] can be used

[76] The typology of IESPs is derived by combining the MCA with clustering analysis (K-

to reveal this distribution insofar as it is coupled with the MCA. Clusters can be established on the basis of the age of the institutions, their type of funding, the total number of teachers and students, the levels of teaching and courses of study (CA, CB, CS, CH, CS[77]), the CONICET researchers and scholarship holders at the IESP headquarters and, finally, the index of institutional recognition and accreditation of courses (IRA), or the annual cost of studies (in Argentine pesos).

At the top of the internal hierarchy in the private higher education sector are 11 IESPs (7 universities and 4 institutes), created in the mid-1990s and located mainly in the metropolitan region. Generally secular, the units in this first group (Cluster 1) are medium-sized (3,768 students and 519 lecturers, 10% of whom work full-time, i.e. 40 hours a week) and offer pre-university and degree programmes in four streams: CA, CB, CH and CS. Such institutions appear to be 'consolidated' in terms of their degree of recognition, their involvement in research and their sources of funding: all have been granted definitive recognition and have generally submitted two assessments to CONEAU (IRA). They also strongly support research activities, as shown by the average number of researchers and CONICET fellows (8 and 4 respectively), and they tend to operate with all types of funding: tuition fees, donations, grants from benefactors, their own financial resources - for example, interest, trusts, investments and loans - and commercialisation of activities. However, these institutions make their access conditional on high tuition fees: on average, 194,926 pesos (minimum 74,689 and maximum 338,697), so that they are similar to institutions aimed primarily at the upper-middle and upper classes.

Alongside this group of institutions is a group of 20 older universities, created between the end of the 1950s and the 1990s (cluster 2). Located for the most part in the metropolitan region (55%) and in the Central and Nuevo Cuyo regions (35%), the majority are secular (16), with a smaller proportion being denominational (4). Larger than the previous group (on average, they have 12,219 students and 1,022 teachers, 7.1% of whom are full-time), they

means version). The variables derived from the MCA dimensions are considered as "criterion variables" for classifying the IESPs into homogeneous groups. This is done using cluster analysis based on K-means partitioning (absorption/total variance = 62.2% for dimension 1 and 16.9% for dimension 2). The Calinski-Harabasz rule is applied to explore the maximum number of clusters: higher values of the index indicate greater distinction between clusters (Mooi et al., 2018) (see Tables 3.3 and 3.4 in the Appendix). However, the Calinski-Harabasz index values between the 3 and 4 cluster options are very similar: 97.5 in the first case and 93.3 in the second. The 4-cluster option is preferred because the distribution of IESPs within each group is more equitable (for example, group 2 of the 3-cluster option concentrates almost 50% of the establishments - 29 out of 61). In addition, the choice of the 4-cluster option is supported by an exploration based on contingency tables that makes it possible to distinguish the divergences of each solution and to assess the analytical implications of the classification result (Urbina Cortés and Bárcena 2019).

[77] Applied sciences (CA), basic sciences (CB), health sciences (CS), human sciences (CH) and social sciences (CS).

provide teaching at all levels and in all subject areas. They are also distinguished by their focus on research and their degree of accreditation: on average, they have 10 researchers and 4 CONICET scholarship holders, and most of them have definitive recognition, with an average of 3 courses accredited by CONEAU (IRA). In general, they are financed by student enrolment fees, the university's own financial resources, and the commercialisation of activities, which illustrates the university's entrepreneurial orientation. With an average annual cost of 89,812 pesos (minimum 51,745, maximum 149,704), they are more affordable than the first group of institutions, and have opened up to the middle classes.

The third group of institutions (Cluster 3) is similar to the first, with the essential difference that the majority of the IESPs that make up this group (14 universities) are denominational (57.1%). Most of them were founded in the 60s, and their headquarters are located in the capitals of the largest provinces (in the Centre, Nuevo Cuyo and Norte). Similar in size to their predecessors (they have an average of 10,316 students and 1,266 teaching staff, 4.4% of whom are full-time), they also offer teaching programmes at all levels, in four subject areas (CA, CS, CS and CH) and are also largely research-oriented and accredited: on the one hand, they have an average of 3 researchers and 4 CONICET fellows; on the other hand, they benefit from the favourable recommendation of CONEAU for their definitive recognition and, on average, have 6 accredited teaching programmes (IRA). The way they operate differs in part from the institutions in the previous group: not only are tuition fees the main source of income, but these institutions also receive donations from benefactors and foundations. However, with an average annual tuition fee of 79,215 pesos (minimum 45,059 and maximum 129,859), they are economically accessible to the same social category of students as the previous group.

Finally, there is a fourth group of institutions (Cluster 4), characterised by the coexistence of universities (8) and institutes (also 8), the majority of which are secular. More recent than the previous groups of institutions (most began their activities in 2000), they are also concentrated in the metropolitan region and Buenos Aires (62.5%). Smaller than their predecessors (with an average of 1,000 students), they also have a smaller teaching staff (141 teachers on average) and, above all, a more precarious one: only 9.7% of them are employed full-time. Their educational supply is also more limited: restricted to pre-university and undergraduate levels, it is confined to the fields of health sciences and humanities. A distinctive feature of these institutions is the low level of development of their research activities: in practice, they do not have CONICET researchers and fellows, but teachers who devote themselves solely to their courses. Furthermore, 14 of these 16 institutions operate under provisional authorisation (CONEAU 2012: 29). Finally, unlike those in the previous three groups, these institutions operate mainly on income from tuition fees alone. In view of these fees, the social profile of the students at these institutions is heterogeneous: while the average annual cost of tuition is fairly high (103,880 pesos), the range of

these costs is very uneven, due to the different courses on offer, and includes courses that are primarily attended by the working classes[78].

Taken together with the previous ACM analysis, these four groups of institutions sketch out the morphology of the private sector and the past and current dynamics underlying its segmentation.

Although Argentina differs from other countries in the region, such as Peru, Colombia, Chile, Brazil and Mexico, in the later creation of its private higher education sector, it shares with these other Latin American countries the accelerated creation of IESPs from the 1990s onwards, in a third wave of expansion identified under the category of 'demand absorption' (Levy, 1995). Also, similarly, the private field is marked by the coexistence of 'elite secular' institutions (e.g. UDESA, UTDT and UCEMA, which come under cluster 1) which stand out from the others by their high tuition fees, accessible to upper-middle and upper-class students, and by their development of postgraduate studies and research activities (del Bello et al. 2007).

Institutions linked to the academic, professional and entrepreneurial sectors have also been created, with a professional profile characteristic of denominational institutions linked to the Catholic Church (clusters 2 and 3, respectively); institutions that enjoy "greater autonomy for functions such as modifying their statutes, creating curricula and modifying study plans, creating academic units, administering goods and services and certifying diplomas" (CONEAU 2012: 29). Finally, alongside the institutions open to students from the various strata of the middle class, more recently created establishments, related to the last group, bear witness to the increasing complexity of the private sector, as well as to the diversification of teaching and study conditions, through their more restricted and, to some extent, less consolidated educational supply. It is to these institutions that undergraduates turn, who "come from lower socio-economic sectors, have to work at an early age and cannot devote themselves to four or more years of higher education" (del Bello et al. 2007: 225).

The channels of inequality in private higher education

How is the private education sector organised?

"Are the 'circuits' of reproduction and social distinction at the root of the reinforcement of inequalities? The qualitative data gathered during our fieldwork in August 2019 will enable us to explore this question, in particular among middle-class students enrolled in upper-class institutions.

As we have already illustrated, and as many authors have already pointed out (Jorrat 2010; García de Fanelli 2015; Rodríguez 2016; Dalle et al. 2019),

[78] The standard deviation is 47,240 pesos. This heterogeneity may be due to the fact that the cluster includes some IESPs offering health-related courses (e.g., medicine and dentistry), which are expensive at undergraduate level (del Bello et al. 2007).

higher education qualifications are strongly correlated with household income. The previous part of this paper also highlighted the strong social segmentation of educational provision: to a large extent, the social differentiation of students between different higher education institutions is associated with their socio-economic background (Plotkin 2006; del Bello et al. 2007; Tiramonti and Ziegler 2008; Gessaghi 2016). We are therefore witnessing the formation of 'unequal school circuits' (Saraví 2019), in other words, differentiated niches of institutions that correspond to the socio-economic and cultural conditions of different social groups (Ball et al. 1995).

However, since the 1990s, "the private education circuit, previously reserved for the attention of national or religious communities, has expanded considerably and has begun to incorporate the upper fractions of the middle classes" (Tiramonti 2005: 56). The educational experiences of the upper social fractions - understood in a broad sense that transcends the level of study - and their impact on patterns of social stratification and inequality (for example, access to and maintenance of privileged social positions), provide material here for understanding the process of segmentation of the higher education sector and the mechanisms of distinction within it.

This is well known: "the education system can ensure the perpetuation of privileges by the simple play of its own logic; in other words, it can serve the privileged without them having to serve it [...] from nursery school to higher education to ensure the perpetuation of social privileges" (Bourdieu & Passeron 2003: 45). The segmentation of the higher education sector thus acts to enhance the value of students' capital and, ultimately, fuels the process of reproducing and reinforcing original social inequalities (Bourdieu and Passeron 1970). Such a mechanism is particularly highlighted by the typology of institutions we have already demonstrated, and the differences in access to the different categories of institution according to the capital held by students.

The private higher education institutions in each of the groups we have examined are not, however, socially homogenous, nor are their conditions of access strictly identical: the range of tuition fees provides a good example. For their part, the private universities that are *a priori* intended for the upper classes (cluster 1) admit a proportion of students with significant economic capital, and another proportion of less well-off students, for whom these universities reserve a place by offering scholarships. The elitist selection of the upper classes is coupled with the relative openness of such institutions to social fractions of less fortunate students. In this sense, the process of producing inequalities deserves to be examined not only between categories of higher education institutions, but also within each category and, at an even finer level, at the very heart of the institutions that represent each of them. This is what we propose here, using the case of an elitist university and its scholarship students. We will show that there are still major inequalities between students, despite the apparent 'social mix' of such

an institution, and that the institution itself participates in this segregation, contrary to the highly inclusive policy embodied in the financial support granted to certain students and in support of a meritocratic policy of excellence.

This institution, one of the most selective in the first set of institutions we examined earlier (cluster 1), provides a good example. According to del Bello *et al* (2007: 101), it falls within the category of 'elite secular' institutions because of its high tuition fees (the average annual cost at undergraduate level is 264,937 pesos, or USD $330 in 2018) and the importance it places on MMaster's, PhD studies and research. The scholarship students we met were outsiders alongside those from the upper classes who were mainly educated by the institution.

> "One of them said: "My mother and I went to see the university after I'd received the scholarship, and she was already saying 'Wow, that's a different world'; because if you know the university in the south, over there in Bahia, there's a difference in the architecture and, let's say, the courses of study, everything's very different. She was so impressed that she said 'well, university isn't like that I...'. But whatever I did, she'd be happy" (E4, from Bahía Blanca, PBA, parents, musicians in the provincial orchestra).[79]

The turnstiles at the entrance to the university, which constitute a tangible barrier preventing anyone from gaining access, undoubtedly influenced the student's mother's perceptions. There is no metro station serving the nearby university either; the university does offer free transport from the distant station, but it is necessary to find out about and book this means of transport; something that can only be made possible by having the cultural capital or social capital gained through knowing the teachers.

> "For me," says this scholarship student, "it's a lot of money [school fees]. For me, anyone who can pay 30,000 pesos a month is already crazy" (E4).

While the university participates in the reproduction process described above, this process is not simply a matter of selecting students on the basis of their economic capital. Other mechanisms are at work, which require us to analyse the tension between the institution's apparent openness and its strategies for occupying a dominant position in the field of higher education.

The testimonies of scholarship students from this 'elite' university, enrolled in a degree in international relations, political science and economics, will provide valuable indicators. Questioned during our surveys on private higher education, on their practices and judgements underlying their educational decision-making[80], these students reveal the key principles

[79] With the aim of anonymising the interviewees, while retaining their specific characteristics, we decided to assign them the letter E and a corresponding number to differentiate the testimonies.

[80] The interview guide applied to the students considered seven analytical dimensions: 1) socio-demographic data, 2) social origins, 3) previous educational pathway, 4) entry into

of the social reproduction ensured by the institution: the promotion of excellence and the assurance of upward social mobility for 'deserving' middle-class students admitted to it, as strategies for legitimising upper-class distinction. By admitting scholarship students, the university seeks to adorn itself with the attributes of a meritocratic institution open to all social categories of high-calibre students - in contrast to their selection on the basis of economic or social capital - and distinguished by their level of excellence. In the competitive market of higher education, both public and private, this quality is the guarantee of a superior position, and the main argument - coupled with the promise of a prestigious career - for attracting new clients. Enjoined to embrace this register of excellence, the scholarship students we were invited by this institution to meet represent the embodiment of these two key principles put forward by the institution: meritocracy and the assurance of social mobility, on the one hand, and internal selection mechanisms, on the other. Behind the artifice of the 'democratisation' of access to such an elite establishment and promises of mobility is concealed a logic of reproduction of the dominant classes, in which scholarship students participate by adhering to the principles and strategies of their university.

The interviews conducted with scholarship students shed light on this process by highlighting the conditions that structure their decision in favour of private higher education, the reasons why they chose this private institution rather than another - among which the guarantee of a successful, cosmopolitan and globalised career figures prominently - and the factors that influence these decisions, such as their capital, experience and various networks of contacts.

From meritocracy to the illusion of equality

Although the majority of the university's students are from a high social background (e.g., parents who are academics or employees with a high status in the professional hierarchy), a considerable proportion (almost 50%) of the university's student population receive grants. Six types of scholarships are awarded to undergraduate students on the basis of merit: 1) bursaries for the winners of the three highest average grades in state schools - which can (albeit rarely) cover up to 100% of tuition fees; 2) bursaries for the winners of the highest average grades in private schools, up to 50%; 3) bursaries for living in the provinces, up to 50%; 4) merit-based scholarships, up to 20%; 5) scholarships for new digital technology courses, up to 20%; and 6) scholarships for winners of the Argentinian Mathematics Olympiad,

higher education, 5) study and student life conditions, 6) graduation conditions and, finally, 7) student representations on the possible role of education in social mobility.

covering up to 100% of study costs[81] (with an annual average of 6/10 for the first 2 years and 7/10 for subsequent years).

Such a contribution undoubtedly enables socially less advantaged groups of students to gain access to a university in this category. As one student explained:

> "I was thinking of going to Santa Fe [one of Argentina's provinces] because it was closer to me and also for financial reasons. I considered the Catholic University of Paraná, which doesn't give scholarships, but the tuition fees weren't as high as at that university and the rent wasn't as high as here [CABA]. Then I spoke to an uncle whose daughter had started studying here; he told me that if I wanted to study international relations, it would be better to go to Buenos Aires and that the university would give me a scholarship. So, I started looking at all the information. And they gave me 90% of the scholarship. As my school receives over 80% of its funding from the state, it's considered a state school scholarship" (E4).

I think," says one student, "that financial support is also a point that needs to be put on the table, because the university gives you a full scholarship and also gives you an allowance. For me, that's enough, but there must be others who can't afford it" (E1, from Mar del Plata, Province of Buenos Aires, mother a housewife and father a supermarket worker).

However, the principle of equality appears relative. The student continues:

"The university always defends equal opportunities in this sense, equal opportunities based on meritocracy. The university makes sure it has the best students" (E1). But this principle of equality appears to be distorted:

> "The faculty profile is like we're all 'nerds' [intellectuals]... but you can see there are a lot of social class differences, right?" (E1).

The apparent equity of treatment of students does not overcome their initial social differentiation, nor does it eliminate it. Perhaps more to the point, the principle of excellence constitutes a mechanism for concealing these differences, which students are called upon to hide and ignore. The reality of equality itself comes up against the lack of visibility given by the institution to the differences between students:

> "The number of students receiving grants is very high. Is there differential treatment? That's not a typical question. What type of scholarship do you have? Nobody asks and nobody knows" (E1).

For an institution like this university, which trains upper-class students, the reproduction of this class and its privileges requires both the preservation

[81] The Sarmiento programme offers a 100% grant for applications submitted by civil society organisations that have signed an agreement with the IESP. The IESP also offers a financial aid programme which consists of granting an *honour loan*, the only guarantee for which is a declaration by the student on his or her honour.

of hierarchies and their negation. Thanks to this invisibility, the institution can amplify its claim of equality between students, and assert the first principle of its application: the fact that, whatever their conditions and capital, all the students are judged by the criterion of excellence. However real it may be, the difference in economic or social capital between grant and non-grant students can be overlooked: it is nonetheless a means of attracting the upper classes, all the more effective because it is not set up as a primary principle of selection.

Excellence as a factor in institutional commitment

To the question "What is the role or importance of education in your family", scholarship students at this elite institution answer:

> "It was quite obvious to me that I was going to go to university, I've always liked academia, and all my brothers and sisters, everyone had something that made them stand out and I was always the most intellectual in the sense that I liked to read" (E1).

> "For me, it was good to pursue a university career, it was like something natural, something implicit" (E2, from Entre Ríos province, mother a history teacher and father an architect).

For these students, enrolling in university studies is "natural" and "obvious". In their eyes, their cultural baggage makes up in part for their lack of economic capital. Indeed, this cultural capital forms the basis of differentiation and inculcation strategies that are considered 'obvious' in certain private institutions, following a logic similar to that which leads students from the most disadvantaged groups to consider that not going to university is 'logical' and is part of a 'normal biography' (Ball et al. 2002: 54). The previous two statements highlight intellectuality as a principle of these classifications. They should also be read as expressing a 'differential' position of their authors: the first towards other households, and the second towards siblings. Two other students answered the same question:

> "The importance of education? Very high, more than anything else for me and my sister, my parents are very aware of the importance of education as a channel of social mobility, so they place a lot of value on it and want us to concentrate on education first and foremost, my parents support me, they don't demand that I have a job outside my studies: "you concentrate on the Faculty, we'll give you the rest, now study". That's always been the case, even at secondary school: 'we give you everything you need, all you have to do is study, get your degree and then you can see what you can do with your life'" (E3, from Villa del Parque, CABA, mother at home and father employed in a restaurant).

> "It's strange, at first I'd say my parents wanted me to finish secondary school, but for higher education there were no exigences. "You finish secondary school and either work or study". My brothers started university

> and didn't finish. They're the ones who push me the most. I feel that the decision to come to this university is a personal commitment to continue deepening my knowledge, that I'm going to have a better future, linked to the fact of having a university degree [...] but regarding the banner I defend, [private education] is not necessarily better than public education, the latter is very good and I'll always defend it" (E1).

Adherence to the institution and its principles of distinction on the basis of cultural capital is fuelled by the over-valuation of such capital, conceived as the primary principle of identification, in ignorance of the economic capital that underpins the differentiation of student classes:

> "I come from a very studious family in every sense of the word and my parents are musicians. From the moment they get up until the moment they go to bed, they study, they do research or they teach. The cultural debate at home is very important. Ever since I was a little girl, reading has been my priority and all the classics are at home. The fact that I think critically [...], well, now I'm very happy, I feel I'm doing what I love and I can see my future" (E4).

Excellence takes on the virtues assigned to the mechanisms of promotion and social mobility. As a result, education is seen by the first of the two previous speakers as an 'upward path' to mobility and represents an important issue for the family, despite belonging to the upper-middle social stratum (mother at home and father employed); the conviction of a possible improvement in this socio-economic situation through university studies is latent and obvious. It feeds on the fear of 'falling' experienced by a middle class anxious to obtain greater skills in order to improve its conditions (Ball et al. 2002: 53). While student E3 qualified the role of home education (probably undervaluing it in order to give pride of place to an autonomous and personal decision that is implicitly meritocratic), he also based his decisions on the hope of a better future, concealing the role of his class (Duru-Bellat 2000).

The social value of the degree awarded by this university is central, since it is seen as a precious resource contested within a market such as the labour market, which, to a large extent, guarantees material and symbolic benefits. Over and above this value, the training and the degree awarded by the university make it possible, in the eyes of these students, to preserve positions in the class structure and increase the possibilities of upward social mobility.

> "When I finish my degree, I'd like to continue studying. The university recommends that you study in another country, mainly the USA or Europe. I'd also like to do a degree [...] I think my economic situation will be better in the future" (E2).

For the students interviewed, the course of study thus expresses a trait of distinction, and obtaining a degree satisfies the aspiration to a position of high social and economic status, capable of generating an upward social trajectory (Tiramonti 2004). The degree "serves as a consolidation strategy

adopted by social groups that are on the rise or which already occupy positions of privilege" (Ziegler 2004: 77).

This stance of legitimising decisions in favour of the elite institution and adjusting to its rules and principles goes hand in hand with justifying the choice of turning to the private higher education sector, despite a heritage favourable to public institutions. The contradiction between the priority given to public education and the preference for studying in the private sector thus emerges in the discourse; a contradiction that calls for justifications:

> "The family view has always been that the public sector was very good, and I still have that. My time in the private sector was fleeting" (E3).

> "Afterwards, the choice of university was not so consensual, my family wanted me to choose the public university, not out of compassion, because today I don't know if they know what [the private university] is like, but they opted for what was more economical for the family" (E1).

> "Parents believe that] [state] education must exist and, because of a socio-economic problem, even if I had the possibility of going to a semi-private school, it was not an option" (E4).

While choosing a private institution means, in principle, adopting a 'lifestyle' linked to tastes determined by social class (Ball et al. 2002: 54), such a choice by middle-class scholarship students is akin to an opportunistic decision (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1997: 33), based both on contacts and chance experiences (obtaining a scholarship) and on overcoming class characteristics. Such a choice also takes the form of a frustrated membership, stemming from both the tension between the public and private sectors and a lack of knowledge of private institutions by those outside them, due to the secrecy with which they are surrounded (Aragón 2012).

The 'elite' institution works to ensure that its qualities are recognised as attributes of excellence: in addition to particularly enviable study conditions, it has a well-trained and competent teaching staff, with whom students identify and from whom they draw justification for their choice of study at this institution and, more generally, in the private sector. The university's image of order prevails over the shortcomings of public universities, which are less attached to respecting the academic calendar and more inclined to encourage study paths that extend beyond the time officially allocated to them. The students we spoke to described the distinctive features of their university in the following terms:

> "We don't have any electricity problems in the classrooms, everything works perfectly. Everything works perfectly, there's nothing out of place. On the question of texts in English: here, everything is so organised, I already know which week I have a presentation or practical work. I already know that in October I have a presentation of a text in English, and now in August I'm preparing for it. This is not a university that lacks resources. It's not as if a student tells me all day long that there's no toilet paper, that the teachers

> don't come, that doesn't happen. And if it does happen, the university solves it" (E1).
>
> "I see it as a cutting-edge university, because of the curriculum, the way the courses are delivered, it always wants to be at the cutting edge, the latest fashion. I think it's perfect, and that's why I chose it" (E3).

As Algañaraz (2019: 290) pointed out, the private sector constructs an image of order and predictability, to which students adjust their own efforts and motivations, forcing themselves to live up to the perceived performance of the institution, leaving aside any distractions to concentrate on their studies. Such representations can give rise to emphatic speeches, in which mention is made of perfection, prestige and the avant-garde, the institution's organisation, the planning of study programmes, academic level, or the infrastructures in place, contrary to the conditions of public education, evoked in cursory terms in discourses with the implicit mention of the University of Buenos Aires (UBA), commonly criticised for its poor infrastructure. Teachers at private universities, on the other hand, are assessed on the basis of characteristics that are presumably specific to that institution:

> "The plurality of ideas is quite important. We've studied with teachers who are Marxists and conservatives, you see the same thing from different points of view. Teachers who are on the side of the previous [progressive] government, others on the side of the current [right-wing] government" (E2).
>
> "The level is very good, always adjusted to the university's current thinking, let's say it's orthodox, let's say it's the product of this orthodoxy" (E5).
>
> "The level of teaching staff is good and they are good researchers. There's a big difference with the UBA, where the teachers may not be full-time researchers. [...] Maybe because those who are currently here do research, so they try to be at the top" (E6).

"The teachers are fairly neutral in the sense that I've never felt pushed towards a certain ideology or things like that; above all, they encourage critical thinking, which for me is fundamental" (E2).

The students are aware of the professional situation of their professors, who are generally full-time, and they praise their skills, teaching methods and the diversity of their teaching. Their comments provide ample evidence of the interaction between the institutions' strategies for occupying a dominant position in the field of higher education and these representations constructed by the students, in the light of Ball et al.'s (2002: 52) assertion on the subject of the categorisation of IESPs: this is a matter both of their performance and of the classification established by the players.

The question of professional success and social mobility at later stages in the student's life is also a determining factor in students' perceptions of university, no less than in their academic and professional lives (Kerckhoff 2001). The range of courses on offer at university is not only a key factor in

attracting students, but also in their acceptance of teaching models and the overall conception of the institution, apart from the social differentiation between students. Thus, the scholarship students interviewed pointed to the social recognition of the university, based on its reputation:

> "...] I did some research on universities, on their prestige, and I spoke to my lycée teachers. Then I started looking at several private institutions to see where they were [...] and I ended up finding this university. After looking at others, I realised that this was the best of them all. They have very specialised teachers. I always read the syllabus before I start a subject; the faculty makes each professor's syllabus available. And in a way... I see endless documents of studies, research, countries where they've lived, books... They have very rich, very academic profiles" (E1).

It is well known that the institution plays a fundamental role in highlighting opportunities for students: "Through their practices, their agents, their structures, [they] create different frameworks of opportunity for students; they open or close doors; they provide this or that type of advice and guidance; they offer or refuse different types of practical and emotional support" (Tarabini et al. 2015: 38). The IESP is thus distinguished by its 'institutional habitus'[82] (Reay 1998; Reay et al. 2001), based on the status of the teaching provided, organisational practices and the order of discourse.

University diplomas can be understood as an element of the cultural capital of graduates at an institutionalised stage in their careers: "Along with the school diploma, this certificate of cultural competence [which] confers on its bearer a constant, legally guaranteed conventional value in terms of culture" (Bourdieu 2011: 219). The bachelor's degree awarded by the university enjoys strong academic recognition and a differential value on the labour market. When asked about the value they attribute to their future degree, students reply:

> "Very high in my case. Because being so young, I'm going to have a degree. I'm going to be 22. And also because of the university I'm at, which is a very prestigious and important university. "And do you think this degree will increase your chances of professional success?" Yes, I do. I know that without a degree, you can't do anything. "What makes the degree from this university different?" I think of the place itself, like the name of the school. The way you walk through the school, the subjects, the teachers, everything. The name [of the university] is very well known. When I volunteered at Buenos Aires City Hall... they told me that they usually took people from this university and the UBA, but not others. I have the impression that the job market is very competitive and that a university degree is always a guarantee" (E3).

[82] "In an earlier work, Reay argued that schools and colleges have identifiable institutional *habitus* and used this concept to demonstrate how the organisational cultures of schools and colleges are linked to wider socio-economical cultures through processes in which schools and their areas of influence shape and reshape each other (Reay, 1998)" (Reay et al. 2001: 2).

> "The degree is an academic guarantee and I think that's very important. And the fact that the university has very well-known professors is like a bigger guarantee. I think that this university gives you a lot because of its prestige and, let's say, that plays a big role. Also, because, academically, it's a very good university and that adds a special value to everything else" (E4).

According to these students, the degree awarded by the university reflects the possession of a recognised and legitimised set of skills and knowledge that are valued on the labour market. According to them, it can not only facilitate their integration into the labour market, but also propel them to a higher level in the professional hierarchy, enabling them to earn a better salary[83] and social benefits such as health insurance (Pérez and Busso 2018).

Once they have got over the symbolic violence of entering university and the initial adjustment period, scholarship students adopt the codes of the institution, embrace the way it works and even legitimise its strategies in the name of excellence and the promised professional success.

> "How was your experience as a student here, because with such a long history in the public university...? At first it was shocking. I've also been to a public university and coming here is like joining a company: you feel like you're joining a company, it was quite shocking, let's say I didn't like it at all, but then you get used to it" (E4).

On the one hand, what matters is the merit and perseverance of each student, and on the other, the university's strategy for attracting the 'best' students. In a sense, students adjust their attitudes to the expectations and strategies of the institution; conversely, their socialisation into its codes reinforces these strategies and allows the principle of merit and excellence to be consolidated as criteria for attracting students with ample capital.

Beyond equality... Social background: a key factor in university careers

Sociological research on university student trajectories, from the theoretical perspective of cultural reproduction, generally classifies students into 'pioneers' and 'inheritors', the former category referring to students whose parents did not go on to higher education. Conversely, 'heir' students have socio-cultural capital and a habitus that constitute a significant advantage in the development of their educational trajectory. Upper-class students have a wide range of educational options, higher expectations of

[83] The general meaning attributed to a degree has a differential impact on the labour market: it does not offer the same opportunities to graduates depending on their academic qualifications.
"The professional title is used differently for a dentist than for an economist or engineer. Similarly, the academic requirements of industry, business or educational institutions are different" (Guzmán 1993: 55).

academic success, additional educational support (e.g., private tuition), the ability to pay the direct and indirect costs of schooling, and access to information thanks to their parents' educational experience, which is itself at the origin of their own trajectory (Ball et al. 2002; Voigt 2007). Thus, family social background not only conditions access to the institution, but is also the source of a division of students according to field of knowledge and type of education. However, the young IESP students interviewed made another distinction between all students: while other, wealthier students were 'clients', they themselves were 'grant holders'.

> "We are all students, but at the same time, 50% or more are customers, as if they were paying for a service. If that service is defective, the university has to rectify it so that the customer can continue. 50% of students are customers and 50% are grant holders" (E3).

Wealthier students are seen as consumers of services and products, and the institution as a commercial organisation obliged to meet the expectations and needs of its students (Suárez Zozaya 2013). What emerges is a mechanism for differentiation and social distinction within the student population: committed to the principle of excellence and to the ability of the elite private institution to ensure their social mobility, scholarship students stand out from the institution's reference universe, both in terms of its inclusion in the private sphere and its promotion of an education placed under the banner of commodification. This dual characteristic feeds the representations of the distinction between student bodies and classes. One of the scholarship students underlined this distinction:

> "Let's just say that these are realities that I'm unaware of, just as they may not imagine what my reality is. Some of the girls I meet have a 90% scholarship, others a 50% scholarship [...]. [...]. We end up meeting for academic reasons, because we like the way we study and understand each other, but also because, when we go out, we go to the same type of place. Young people here spend 600 pesos [20 dollars] in a disco and, for me, 600 pesos is three days of daily life, unless I have to pay for photocopies" (E4).

Mechanisms of distinction also create barriers in sociable spaces and affect the construction of social ties and belonging (contacts, friendship networks, meetings, etc.) which, in the long term, influence opportunities and the reproduction of patterns of social stratification and inequality.

A significant proportion of the students interviewed, even though they receive grants, have a certain amount of economic capital and have often accumulated other types of capital (social, academic, cultural) within their families, which reduces the obstacles to obtaining a degree. What is more, their inclusion in the world of upper-class students is, in their own eyes, an obstacle to their exclusion from that world. The fact that different social fractions of students are rooted in the social sphere of the elite university is clearly a key factor in reproducing patterns of internal differentiation between these fractions of students.

When asked about the possible relationship between courses and student profile, students on grants replied:

> "I don't know if it's a different profile, but there is a kind of predominance. Those of us who study political science are the most progressive, our professors speak with inclusive language [without gender connotations]. I took exams like that. In economics, on the other hand, they tend to be more business-oriented, the more conservative side. This difference is marked and noticeable" (E3).

Students' preferences and choices for certain courses - whether 'progressive' (in political science) or conservative and entrepreneurial (in economics) - reveal 'the cultural models that link certain professions and educational choices to a social milieu' - in other words, 'the socially conditioned predisposition to adapt to the models, rules and values that govern the institution' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2003: 28) - and constitute marks of distinction between students. More specifically, in this case, such differentiated student orientations are an extension of inherited social dispositions, so that the disciplinary cleavages which mark the different study trajectories constitute a matrix of distinction according to the students' starting capital. Middle-class students with scholarships may overemphasise their proximity to certain cultural models promoted by the institution, but they are nonetheless, to a certain extent, assigned to certain courses rather than others, and are more closely integrated into a concept of knowledge marked by the seal of commercialisation, which is a priority for students from the upper classes coveted by the university.

Merit-based grants do, to some extent, enable middle-class students to gain access to elitist institutions. But equality of status between non-scholarship students from the upper class and scholarship students from the middle class, and any affinities they may have, are not enough to reduce the inequality of initial conditions or those of university trajectories. To a certain extent, because of the high degree of social segmentation in the field of higher education, middle-class scholarship students in such an "elite" university are subject to "exclusionary integration" (Bayon 2015, in Alvarez 2019: 53). At the very least, they live in tension between their disadvantaged social condition, their adherence to the principles driven by the institution - excellence and social success, - the difficulty of espousing certain rules for promoting these principles - including that of the merchandising of knowledge, and their willing tolerance of inequalities. As scholarship-holders, they distinguish themselves from the 'clients' represented by upper-class students who have already accepted the rules and principles of the university, but they end up making these rules and principles their own, in a bid to identify with these 'other' students. This has been observed elsewhere, in Colombia in particular, at one of the main private universities training the Colombian elite, where Maria José Alvarez Rivadulla noted in a study of scholarship holders at this university: "Certain prejudices break down, for example, that of discrimination, or at least explicit discrimination. Inequality,

however, becomes more obvious. Equal treatment is seen as fundamental, justified and claimed on the basis of meritocracy and anchored in the dignity of high academic achievement: 'we are all equal here, we are all very intelligent' (Alvarez Rivadulla 2019: 65).

What's missing here are the discourses made by students without grants. But we were not able to access them, as the university preferred to let us see and hear - the better to assert a meritocratic policy of equity? - those who would not fail to adhere to the principle of excellence that has enabled them to gain access to such a university institution. However, our research has attempted to show the various decision-making mechanisms that influence the choice of families and scholarship students, the role played by socio-economic capital in the university trajectory, and the representations of the institution' prestige. On analysis, policies to open up 'elite' universities on a meritocratic basis undoubtedly increase and improve the conditions of social mobility for middle-class students; but they cannot conceal the logic which, despite this openness, contributes, in Argentina as elsewhere, to the reproduction of inequalities in higher education. Another limitation of our study is that it is based on a single institution (in Cluster 1), but its conclusions invite wider hypotheses about these same processes in other renowned private institutions and, on another scale, in all institutions subject to widening student recruitment.

Conclusion

On the basis of empirical material and quantitative analysis, this paper set out to show the process of social construction of the private higher education system in Argentina, and the various mechanisms of social differentiation within it. According to Gessaghi, in Argentina "the system for training elites was not structured in the same way as in other countries. The republican and egalitarian matrix prevented this. However, the upper classes have developed their own space of institutions that guarantee them socialisation 'among themselves'. The expansion of the different levels of the system, combined with the co-option of certain institutions by the wealthiest classes, without any intervention by the State, means that we can speak of 'segregative democratisation' in the education system" (Gessaghi 2016: 250).

By analysing the personal experiences of students at one of the most prestigious private universities, through their decisions, expectations and perceptions, we were able to identify the 'circuits of inequality' associated with belonging to the upper middle classes. This enabled us to reveal certain aspects of social distinction through the articulation of different mechanisms of reproduction within this university. Two approaches were combined, quantitative and qualitative. The first revealed the underlying structure of private higher education circuits (ACM and clusters), while the second

revealed the mechanisms that contribute to the (re)production of social inequalities.

Tracing the history of the twentieth century has enabled us to observe Argentina's shift from egalitarian public policies to disparate setbacks. The exceptional nature of Argentina makes it more difficult to compare (but not contrast) it with the French system of social distinction orchestrated by certain institutions, or with Latin America, where inequalities are greater and the control over the quality of private higher education is weaker. For example, for-profit higher education is banned in Argentina, unlike in many other countries. There are no private institutions of very low quality (defined as "garage" in Colombia or Patito in Mexico), and no multinational consortia (such as Laureate Education), which have a strong presence in Mexico[84] and Peru.

Private education providers do not always operate to the detriment of educational quality as they do in other latitudes, but neither do they always have the material s, cultural or social resources, symbolic capital, or relations with influential power groups (political, commercial, ecclesiastical).

Argentina still relies on the heritage provided by the capital linked to the large landowners, but is also developing on the basis of new segments of the economic sector so that the analysis of its private higher education sector cannot be carried out using the same frameworks as those used in other parts of the world. Such an analysis needs to take account of the social and institutional configuration of the private sector: a non-exclusive system, which grants much greater opportunity to structures than in the rest of Latin America.

It would also be necessary to carry out comparative studies with segments of the student populations of other university clusters, in order to observe how social capital is transmitted there and embodied in the experiences, perspectives and expectations of students; how new inequalities are interpreted and even contested; and to what extent, despite the current inertia linked to previous policies and in a post-pandemic context, the 'garages' or 'Patito' universities that emerge in crisis situations could emerge. Is the common view of schools as a factor in equalising opportunities and improving social conditions still valid, or has it been transformed by thirty years of development of the private education sector?

Such questions arise because, in a country with a strong egalitarian tradition, the education system is no stranger to multiple inequalities and, as we have shown, socio-economic origins play a part in the ranking of individuals, particularly within private higher education institutions. The granting of merit-based scholarships provides a good example: rather than increasing equality of conditions by accepting students with a lower academic level, these scholarships favour access to the dominant private institutions in the field of higher education to those who are predisposed to

[84] See the text on Mexico in this book.

adapt to the institution thanks to their advantageous family circumstances, and capable of distinguishing themselves. While they are supposed to be diminishing, as mentioned in the introduction, social hierarchies are revealed as one enters the university world. Certain determinants of differentiation are naturalised and internalised by students in the name of meritocracy, in ignorance of their inherited privilege; a privilege that can make their condition invisible.

References

Adrogué, C., Corengia Á., García de Fanelli A. and Pita Carranza M. (2014). "La investigación en las universidades privadas en la Argentina. Cambios tras las políticas de aseguramiento de calidad y financiamiento competitivo", *Revista Iberoamericana sobre calidad, eficacia y cambio en Educación,* vol. 12, nº 3, p. 73-91.

Adrogué, C., García de Fanelli, A., Pita Carranza M. and Salto D. J. (2019). "Las universidades frente al aseguramiento de la calidad y las políticas de financiamiento de la investigación: estudios de caso en el sector privado argentino", *Revista de la Educación superior,* vol. 48, nº 190, pp. 45-70.

Algañaraz Soria V. H. (2019). "El circuito de las universidades privadas en Argentina (1955-1983): entre la autonomía académica y la heteronomía del campo de poder. Hacia una tipología de sus instituciones", *Sociológica,* nº 96, pp. 275-318.

Alvarez Rivadulla, M. J. (2019). "¿Los becados con los becados y los ricos con los ricos? Interacciones entre clases sociales distintas en una universidad de elite", *Desacatos*, nº 59, pp. 50-67.

Aragón Falomir, J. (2012). "Reseña del libro de Stéphanie Grousset-Charrière: La face cachée de Harvard. La socialisation de l'élite dans les sociétés secrètes étudiantes", *Ideas #3,* Paris, la Documentation française.

Aragón Falomir, J. (2020). "Reseña del libro de Eduardo Miguez: Critica (y reivindicación) de la universidad pública", *Revista Iberoamericana sobre la Educación Superior*, vol. 11, no.º 32, pp. 229-233.

Aragón Falomir, J. and Rodríguez S. (2020). "Inégalités et enseignement supérieur : entre politiques publiques et développement du secteur privé en Argentine", *Papiers de Recherche,* AFD, Paris.

Aragón Falomir, J. (2021). "¿Emergencia de la derecha radical en México?", *Encrucijadas. Revista Critica de Ciencias Sociales,* vol. 22, p. 1-20.

Arias Ortiz, E., Elacqua, G. and González C. (2017). "Making the most of higher education", In Matias Busso Julián Cristia, Diana Hincapié, Julián Messina and Laura Ripani (eds.). (2017). *Learning Better: Public Policies for Skills Development*, Washington DC, Inter-American Development Bank.

Atilio, J. (2006). *El modelo agro exportador argentino (1880-1939)*, Buenos Aires, Baltgrafica.

Balán J. and García de Fanelli A. M. (1993). "El sector privado de la educación superior: políticas públicas y sus resultados recientes en cinco países de América latina", *Documento CEDES,* Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Balán, J. and García de Fanelli A. M. (1997). "El sector privado de la educación superior", in Rollin Kent (comp.), *Los temas críticos de la educación superior en América latina en los años noventa. Comparative studies*, Mexico, FCE.

Ball, S., Davies J., David M. and Reay D. (2002). "Classification and Judgment: social class and the cognitive structures of choice of higher education", *British Journal of sociology of Education*, vol. 23, nº 1, p. 51-72.

Ball, S., Bowe R. and Gewirtz S. (1995). "Circuits of Schooling: A Sociological Exploration of Parental Choice of School in Social Class Contexts", *The Sociological Review,* vol. 43, nº 1, p. 52-78.

Barsky, O. and Corengia Á. (2017). *La educación universitaria privada en argentina*, *Debate Universitario*, vol. 5, nº 10, pp. 31-70.

Barsky, O. and Gelman J. (2001). *Historia del agro argentino: desde la conquista hasta comienzos del siglo XXI*, Buenos Aires, Sudamericana.

Barsky, O., Corengia A., Fliguer J. and Michelini G. (2016). *La investigación en la universidad privada argentina*, Buenos Aires, CRUP.

Bayón, C. (2015). *La integración excluyente. Experiencias, discursos y representaciones de la pobreza urbana en México*, Universidad nacional Autónoma de México/Bonilla Artigas editores, México.

Bourdieu, P. (1979). *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris.

Bourdieu, P. (2011). *Las estrategias de la reproducción social*, Buenos Aires, siglo XXI.

Bourdieu, P. and Passeron J.-C. (1970). *La reproduction. Éléments d'une théorie du système d'enseignement*, Paris, Les éditions du minuit.

Bourdieu, P. and Passeron J.-C., (2003 [1964]). *Los herederos: los estudiantes y la cultura*, Buenos Aires, siglo XXI.

Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant L. (1992). *Réponses. Pour une anthropologie réflexive*, Paris, Seuil.

Buchbinder, P. (2005). *Historia de las Universidades Argentinas,* Buenos Aires, Sudamericana.

Busso, M. and Messina J. (2020). *The Inequality Crisis. Latin America and the Caribbean at the crossroads*, Washington DC, Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo.

CEDOP-UBA (2007/2008). "Encuesta", *Archivos CEDOP-UBA,* University of Buenos Aires.

CONEAU (Comisión Nacional de Evaluación y Acreditación Universitaria) (2012), *La CONEAU y el sistema universitario argentino: memoria 1996-2011*, Buenos Aires, CONEAU.

CONEAU (n. d.). "Evaluaciones Externas de las instituciones universitarias en Argentina", *Publicaciones CONEAU.* [https://www.coneau.gob.ar/coneau/publicaciones/evaluaciones-externas/].

Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas CONICET (n.d.). *Comunidad CONICET*. [https://www.conicet.gov.ar/].

Consejos Regionales de Planificación de la Educación Superior (s. f.). [https://www.argentina.gob.ar/educacion/universidades/consejos-regionales-cpres].

Consejo de Rectores de Universidades Privadas de la Argentina (2020). "Anuario de estadísticas universitarias de la Secretaria de Políticas Universitarias". [http://www.bnm.me.gov.ar/giga1/documentos/EL004320.pdf].

Cristia, J. and Pulido X. (2020). "La educación en América latina y el caribe: Segregated and unequal", in Matías Busso and Julián Messina (eds.), *The*

Inequality crisis. Latin America and the Caribbean at the crossroads, Washington DC, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Dalle, P. (2012). *Cambios recientes en la estratificación social en Argentina (2003-2011). Inflexiones y dinámicas emergentes de movilidad social*, Buenos Aires, CLACSO.

Dalle, P., Jorrat R. and Riveiro M. (2018). "Movilidad social intergeneracional", in Juan Ignacio Piovani and Agustín Salvia (coord.), *La Argentina en el siglo XXI: Cómo somos, vivimos y convivimos en una sociedad desigual. Encuesta Nacional sobre la Estructura Social*, Buenos Aires, siglo XXI.

Dalle, P., Boniolo P. and Navarro-Cendejas J. (2019). "Efectos del origen social familiar en el logro educativo en el nivel superior en Argentina y México". *Revista de educación y derecho,* nº 19, p. 1-28.

Del Bello, J. C., Barsky O. and Giménez G. (2007). *La universidad privada Argentina*, Buenos Aires, Libros del Zorzal.

Doberti, J. I. and Gabay G. (2016). *La Universidad Pública y la Universidad Privada: Problemas Metodológicos en las Comparaciones*, Documento de trabajo nº 1, Facultad de Ciencias Económicas, Universidad de Buenos Aires.

Duru-Bellat, M. (2000). "Social inequalities in the French education system: the joint effect of individual and contextual factors", *Journal of Education Policy,* vol. 15, nº 1, p. 33-40.

Etcheverry, J. G. (2000). "La educación en la Argentina actual", *Revista Española de Educación Comparada,* nº 6, p. 47-65.

Facundo A. (2010). "The Rich in Argentina over the Twentieth Century, 1932-2004", in A. B. Atkinson & T. Piketty (eds.), Top *Incomes over the Twentieth Century: A Global Perspective*, Oxford, Oxford Press.

García de Fanelli, A. M. (1997). "La expansión de las universidades privadas", *Pensamiento Universitario*, vol. 5, pp. 56-72.

García de Fanelli, A. M. (2015). "La cuestión de la graduación en las universidades nacionales de la Argentina: Indicadores y políticas públicas a comienzos del siglo XXI", *Propuesta Educativa*, nº 43, p. 17-31.

García de Fanelli, A. M. (2016). *Educación superior en Iberoamérica*. Informe 2016. Informe nacional: Argentina. [https://cinda.cl/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/educacion-superior-en-iberoamerica-informe-2016-informe-nacional-argentina.pdf].

Gérard, E. (2020). « L'expansion de l'enseignement supérieur privé et le creusement des inégalités sociales. Analyses à partir de l'Argentine, de l'Inde, du Mexique, du Pérou, de la République Démocratique du Congo, du Sénégal, du Vietnam », *Papiers de Recherche AFD,* n° 156, Paris.

Germani, G. (1955). *Estructura social en Argentina. Análisis estadístico*. Buenos Aires, Ediciones del Solar.

Gessaghi, V. (2016). *La educación de la clase alta en Argentina. Entre la herencia y el mérito*, Buenos Aires, siglo XXI.

Guzmán, C. (1993). "El título profesional, ¿para qué?", *Análisis de problemas universitarios*, nº 9, p. 51-55.

Hair, Joseph, Rolph Anderson, Ronald Tatham and William Black (1999). *Multivariate Analysis*, Madrid, Prentice Hall.

Hodkinson P. and Sparkes A. (1997). "Careership: a sociological theory of career decision making", *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* vol. 18, nº 1.

INDEC (2010). *Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y viviendas. Resultados definitivos*, Serie B. nº 2, Tomo 1. Indec, Buenos Aires Argentina.

INDEC (1984). *La pobreza en la Argentina*. Serie Estudios, nº 1. Buenos Aires.
Jorrat, R. (2010), "Logros educacionales y movilidad educacional intergeneracional en Argentina", *Desarrollo Económico*, vol. 49, no.º 196, pp. 573-604.
Jorrat, R. (2016). *"De tal padre... tal hijo?" Estudios sobre movilidad social en Argentina*, Buenos Aires, Editorial Dunken.
Kaplan, C. and Piovani J. I. (2018). "Trayectorias y capitales socioeducativos", in Juan Ignacio Piovani and Agustín Salvia (coord.), *La Argentina en el siglo XXI: How we are, how we live and how we live together in a diverse society. Encuesta Nacional sobre la Estructura Social*, Buenos Aires, siglo XXI.
Kerckhoff, A. (2001). "Education and Social Stratification Processes in Comparative Perspective", *Sociology of Education,* vol. 74, p. 3-18.
Levy, D. (1995). *La educación superior y el Estado en Latinoamérica. Desafíos privados al predominio público*, Mexico, CESU-UNAM, FLACSO-Porrúa.
López R. P. and Fachelli S. (2015). *Análisis de correspondencias. Slides*. [https://pagines.uab.cat/plopez/sites/pagines.uab.cat.plopez/files/ACO-UBA. pdf].
Míguez, E. (2018). *Critica (y reivindicación) de la Universidad pública*, Buenos Aires, siglo XXI.
Mooi E., Sarstedt M. and Mooi-Reci I. (2018). "Cluster Analysis", *Market Research.* Springer Texts in Business and Economics. Springer, Singapore.
Neidhöfer G., Serrano J. and Gasparini L. (2018). "Educational inequality and intergenerational mobility in Latin America: A new database", *Journal of Development Economics,* vol. 134, p. 329-349.
Orione, J. (2008). *Historia critica de la ciencia argentina. Del proyecto de Sarmiento al reino del pensamiento mágico*, Buenos Aires, Capital Intelectual.
Oxfam (2015). *Privileges that deny rights. Extreme inequality and the hijacking of democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean.* Buho. [https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/reporte_ iguales-oxfambr.pdf].
Palomino, H. (1989). "Reflexiones sobre la evolución de las clases medias en la Argentina", *El Bimestre Político y Económico*, nº 42, p. 10-15.
Pérez Rasetti, C. (2014). "La expansión de la educación universitaria en argentina: políticas y actores", *Integración y conocimiento,* nº 2, pp. 8-32.
Pérez, P. E. and Busso M. (2018). "Juventudes, educación y trabajo", in Juan Ignacio Piovani and Agustín Salvia (coord.), *La Argentina en el siglo XXI: Cómo somos, vivimos y convivimos en una sociedad desigual. Encuesta Nacional sobre la Estructura Social*, Buenos Aires, siglo XXI.
Piketty, T. (2013). *Le Capital au XXIe siècle*, Paris, Seuil. Piketty, T. (2019). *Capital and Ideology*, Paris, Seuil.
Plotkin, M. (2006). *La privatización de la educación superior y las ciencias sociales en Argentina. Un estudio de las carreras de Psicología y Economía*, Buenos Aires, CLACSO.
Reay, D. (1998). "'Always knowing' and 'never being sure': Familial and institutional habituses and higher education choice", *Journal of Education Policy*, vol. 13, nº 4, pp. 519-529.
Reay, D., David M. and Ball S. (2001). "Making a difference? Institutional habituses and higher education choice", *Sociological Research Online*, vol. 5, nº 4, p. 14-25.
Rodríguez, S. (2016). "Logros educativos en el nivel de instrucción superior y movilidad educacional intergeneracional en Argentina", *Sociológica*, nº 88, p. 167-200.

Saraví, G. (2019). "Expansión educativa y nuevas desigualdades de clase", in María Cristina Bayón (coord.), *Las grietas del neoliberalismo: dimensiones de la desigualdad contemporánea en México*, Mexico City, UNAM-IIS.

SPU (Secretaria de Políticas Universitarias) (s. d.). [https://www.argentina.gob.ar/educacion/secretaria-politicas-universitarias].

SPU (2013). *Anuario de Estadísticas Universitarias - Argentina 2013*. Buenos Aires: SPU.

SPU (2018-2019). Síntesis de Información. Estadísticas Universitarias 2017- 2018. [https://www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/sintesis_2018-2019_sistema_universitario_argentino_0.pdf].

Souroujon G. and Lesgart C. (2021). "Populism. Uses, abuses and travel o an incomfortable concept". In G. Pereyra y G. Souroujon (eds.). *Global Resurgence of the Right. Conceptual and Regional Perspectives*. Routledge. pp. 54-76.

Suárez Zozaya, M. H. (2013). "Los estudiantes como consumidores Acerca- miento a la mercantilización de la educación superior a través de las respuestas a la Encuesta Nacional de Alumnos de Educación Superior (ENAES)", *Perfiles Educativos*, vol. 35, no.º 139, pp. 171-187.

Suasnábar, C. and Rovelli L. (2011). "Políticas universitarias en Argentina: entre los legados modernizadores y la búsqueda de una nueva agenda", *Innovación educativa*, vol. 11, nº 57, pp. 21-30.

Tarabini, A., Curran M. and Fontdevila C. (2015). "El habitus institucional: una herramienta teórica y metodológica para el estudio de la cultura escolar", *Revista tempora*, nº 18, p. 37-58.

Tiramonti, G. (2005). "La educación argentina en el contexto de las transformaciones de los años 90", *Pro-Posições*, vol. 16, nº 3, p. 53-74.

Tiramonti, G. (comp.) (2004). *La trama de la desigualdad educativa. Mutaciones recientes en la escuela media*, Buenos Aires, Manantial.

Tiramonti, G. and Ziegler S. (2008). *La educación de las elites. Aspiraciones, estrategias y oportunidades*, Buenos Aires, Paidós.

Torrado, S. (1992). *Estructura social de la Argentina, 1945-1983*, Buenos Aires, Ediciones de la Flor.

Tuñón, I. and Halperin V. (2010). "Desigualdad social y percepción de la calidad en la oferta educativa en la Argentina urbana", *Revista electrónica de investigación educativa*, vol. 12, nº 2, p. 1-23.

Tunnermann, C. (2008). *Noventa años de la Reforma Universitaria de Cordoba (1918-2008).* Buenos Aires, CLACSO.

Urbina Cortés, G. and Bárcena S. (2019). *Herramientas de análisis multivariado para la investigación social. Una guía práctica en STATA*, Mexico, Tecnológico de Monterrey.

Voigt, K. (2007). "Individual choice and unequal participation in higher education", *Theory and Research in Education*, vol. 5, nº 1, pp. 87-112.

Wilkinson R. and Pickett K. (2019). *Equality. How more egalitarian societies improve collective well-being,* Madrid, Capitán Swing.

WID (2020). "Country: Argentina", in Thomas Piketty (coord) *WID.world*. [https://wid.world/world/#sptinc_p0p50_z/US;FR;DE;CN;ZA;GB;WO;AR;MX/last/eu/k/p/yearly/s/false/5.2355/30/curve/false/country].

Zelaya, M. (2012). "La expansión de universidades privadas en el caso argentino". *Pro-Posiçoes,* vol. 23, nº 2, pp. 179-194.

Zelaya, M. (2019). 'Políticas públicas de educación superior universitaria: expansión/inclusión. El caso de las extensiones áulicas universitarias en la

Provincia de Buenos Aires, Argentina" *Digital Publisher, CEIT,* vol. 4, nº 2, p. 17-30.

Ziegler, S. (2004). "La escolarización de las elites: un acercamiento a la socialización de los jóvenes de sectores favorecidos en la Argentina actual", in Guillermina Tiramonti (comp.), La trama de la desigualdad educativa. *Mutaciones recientes en la escuela media*, Buenos Aires, Manantial.

Appendix

Table 3.4 *Dispersion explained by the different dimensions*

Dimension	Variance	Percentage of variance explained	Cumulative percentage of variance explained
Dimension 1	**0.3227974**	**62.2**	**62.2**
Dimension 2	**0.0880351**	**16.9**	**79.1**
Dimension 3	0.0165541	3.2	82.3
Dimension 4	0.0082845	1.6	83.8
Dimension 5	0.0069297	1.3	85.2
Dimension 6	0.0034393	0.7	85.8
Dimension 7	0.0016979	0.3	86.2
Dimension 8	0.0011151	0.2	86.4
Dimension 9	0.0006626	0.1	86.5
Total	0.5196467	100.0	100.0

Source: authors.

Note: Method: Burt/adjusted inertias.
Total variance = 0. 5196467. Number of dimensions: 2.

Table 3.5 *Calinski/Harabasz pseudo-F test*

Number of clustersCalinski-Harabasz	Pseudo-F
3	97,5
4	93,3

Source: authors.

Table 3.6 *Cluster distribution (x3)*

Cluster	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
1	18	29.5	29.5
2	29	47.5	77.1
3	14	23.0	100.0
Total	61	100.0	

Source: authors.

Table 3.7 *Cluster distribution (x4)*

Cluster	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
1	11	18.0	18.0
2	20	32.8	50.8
3	14	23.0	73.8
4	16	26.2	100.0
Total	61	100.0	

Source: authors.

(state diploma) that officially authorises access to higher education is therefore the key to regulating the flow of students. The pass rate has risen sharply over the past ten years, as has the absolute number of graduates.

Up to now, in the DRC, inequality in HE has been linked to the socio-economic level of families, and correlatively to local and gender factors. A poor, rural boy has very little chance of obtaining a state diploma. A rural provincial girl has almost no chance of getting beyond lower secondary education. As a result, although the secondary completion rate is very skewed in favour of the western provinces, it is still very unfavourable to girls. While more than one boy in three finishes secondary school, barely one girl in five graduates: 4 out of 5 female students enrolled in the first year of secondary school do not finish on time. However, a young girl from an affluent, urban background who passes this stage has every chance of accessing higher education, just like a boy from the same background.

On the basis of the available data, it is difficult to model the interactions between these factors. The family's urban residence attenuates the handicap of social-familial origin and the relative handicap of gender. Privileged social status implies access to the city. A young urban dweller from a modest family has little chance of being admitted to a HEI and even less chance of graduating, but much more chance than a young person from a small provincial town. Of course, the quality of what is on offer is linked to urbanity, and more specifically to the age of the establishment in a city. Subjectively, urban, highly literate and demanding families emphasise, even before quality, the "moral rigour" and "discipline" of the leading denominational establishments, which are also the oldest. The seriousness of the establishment, compliance with specifications and academic calendars, the absence of unrest and strikes, and even of corruption, are the decisive criteria for families whose children attend the private institutes or universities with the strongest presence in the city.

Tuition fees: one of several conditions of access that do not pit public and private higher education against each other

So far, only a minority of a generation has attained an upper secondary qualification, and an even smaller minority are enrolled in HE (8 to 10%). However, it is difficult to assess precisely the role of tuition fees as a barrier to entry. The few relevant data available indicate instead that the fees barrier plays an enormous role in limiting, bogging down or blocking pathways during schooling. In the context of the means of communication available in the DRClocation is a decisive factor that guides IESP promoters in their search for revenue niches and also considerably limits students' choices. As we have seen, Kinshasa combines all the advantages and presents itself as an incomparable educational market.

It is also difficult to know whether educational inequalities are determined by different levels of public funding for HEIs. In other words, is inequality greater in the private sector than in the public sector? As we

have seen, the state's financial contribution to the public sector is limited to covering the official share of salaries. With the exception of a few benchmark IESPs, education costs in the public sector are close to those in the private sector. The cost of studying at public institutions ranges from $300 to $500 a year[172] in the social sciences and humanities faculties, and from $500 to $900 in the sciences, medicine, polytechnic and agricultural science faculties. In all these faculties, there are other fees, known as "related fees", the amounts and terms of which are reviewed annually by the Academic Instructions issued by the ES Cabinet. There are also unofficial fees (on a fee-for-service basis) which are systematically denounced by students at the most recognised public institutions. It is therefore difficult to establish indicators of inequality based on tuition fees.

Nor does categorising IESPs according to their main streams provide a meaningful indicator of quality or inequality. Medicine, for example, is not necessarily an elite subject. Many IESPs and public-sector faculties award medical degrees that are not highly valued, or barely recognised, in the medical world. The same applies to law. Bar associations refuse to admit law graduates from certain private universities. Some IESPs that award technical qualifications are so poorly equipped that the abilities of the graduates immediately raise questions in the minds of all observers, starting with the students themselves. Polytechnic faculties, which have little competition in the private sector, appear to be just as 'dilapidated' as SHS faculties.

Apart from specific professional niches such as that successfully occupied by ISSI (see *above*), differences in quality cut across the public-private divide. It is illusory to characterise the private sector as a whole. While a third or even 50% of ISSIs do not appear to be viable or have difficulty becoming so (2011 Viability Survey), some establishments offer education programmes of at least the same quality as the main historic public institutions and far superior to many of the programmes of more recent public institutions! This is the case at UNH, with its costly programmes in food science and technology.

Subject to an assessment that has yet to be carried out beyond the programmes on paper, it can be imagined that UMapon (below) distinguishes itself in two areas of engineering. Some institutions, such as UEA and ULPGL, can highlight their quality in very specific fields that reflect a regional situation and a particular market: social services, peace, conflict management and resolution or the environment in Kivu. But it would be wrong to see the private sector and even its institutions, which proclaim their excellence, as the strictly exclusive domain of a social super-elite.

In the public debate, the costs of enrolment and education required from students and their families take centre stage. While free education is no

[172] Parents' contributions to the cost of education at public universities are mainly directed towards salary supplements and not towards the operation or support of teaching.

longer an option for anyone in any sector, fees are the focus of much attention from students[173]. The overall amount of the fees and the way in which they are paid, or the possibility of special arrangements, seem to be decisive factors in their strategies, which are sometimes far removed from the very unequal quality of study conditions.

Although the promoters of the main IESPs willingly point out the rare reductions, "bursaries" or other advantages granted to a handful of "needy-deserving" students, it is always in reference to a criterion of excellence or autochthony. The principle that fees could be proportional to family assets never came up in our interviews with the various people in charge of IESPs, nor with people from public institutions. Students never denounce social inequality in education, but the injustice of institutional practices.

The ***Mapon University (UMapon)*** was founded in 2016 with its own funds in Kindu[174], the capital of the province of Maniema, a sparsely urbanised region with little industry. UMapon specialises in engineering sciences and has recently added a second stream in economics and management. Its promoter, a native of the region, is an economist, former finance minister and prime minister, and currently a senator. Local and political/territorial logic is fundamental here, but the recruitment horizon is intended to be national. The discourse combines a rationale of priority service to "local children" and that of universal excellence. It is open to young people from other provinces in the East, particularly North Kivu. Facilities are nevertheless offered to local children to help them "achieve excellence". UMapon is authorised to operate following a favourable viability assessment. Like the UNH, UMapon is bilingual (French-English) and has exceptional working conditions. It has an impressive, modern infrastructure and exceptional equipment. Compared with other IESPs in the DRC, UMapon is a special case because of its vitality and its lower costs than those of the UNH. In fact, the resources mobilised are considerable, as is the founder's position as an "eminent son of the soil"[175]. But the region remains marginal on the higher education map, remote and underdeveloped. Making it attractive on a national scale is a challenge. UMapon undoubtedly augurs well for future initiatives aiming for excellence, taking on high costs without giving up on defining itself as working for the public good and education as a common good. The Mapon Foundation, which also manages a school complex, does not limit its activities to the education sector. It also supports a state-of-the-art hospital and a 34-hectare farm. It is also active in the local distribution of drinking water. This is a model based on the integration of services and various activities involving different national and international partners, reminiscent of the archetypal Congolese colonial mission.

[173] The prospect of free education is no longer defended by public sector teachers.

[174] Located in the eastern part of the DRC, Kindu is an hour and a half's flight from Kinshasa.

[175] Created in 2001, the BCECO (Central Coordination Office), which was headed for a long time by the founder of the Mapon Foundation (2003-2010), had as its main mandate the management of large-scale projects financed by the World Bank, the African Development Bank and other bilateral or multilateral donors. The founder of UMapon and the Fondation Mapon was then Minister of Finance from February 2010 to April 2012 and Prime Minister until 2016.

Efforts to combat inequalities are very marginal in HEIs and often symbolic. They are always the result of strategies specific to each institution rather than national policies, which are non-existent when it comes to social and gender inequalities.

The table 7.5 on the following page illustrates the fee structure at the Catholic University of Bukavu.

In the DRC, students pay the "minerval" and various fees, even in the private sector, as shown in Table 7.5 for the Catholic University of Bukavu. Tuition fees vary from around $300 a year to over $1,000, and payment methods vary widely. Students also have a variety of personal strategies for applying for instalments and negotiating them. The institutions, for their part, use a great deal of imagination to secure payments. Almost all the IESPs we surveyed have a grid of 2 or 3 instalments of tuition fees. It was difficult for us to assess the extent of withdrawal due to the non-payment of tuition fees in full, as this is often seen as temporary. IESP students describe paying fees as an ongoing guerrilla war with the administration. But the situation is hardly any different at public IESs.

Table 7.5 *Official tuition fees in selected HEIs (in $)*

		Fees according to the cycle or course of study									Total costs		
Province/ City	Institution	Registration or re-registration	Graduation / Licence (LMD)	Licence/Master (LMD)	Medicine, Agronomy, Polytechnic, Architecture					Miscellaneous costs	External support	Graduation	Licence	Medicine, Agronomy, Polytechnic, Architecture
					G1	G2-G3	D1	D2-D3	D4					
Kinshasa	Bel Campus University	20	530	700	530	630	730	830	1,030					
	URK	50	400	450					800	50		500	550	900
	ISIPA	10 to 15	550	550						45		605	610	
	ISSI		860								350	1,210		
	UCC	25	1,212	1,212										
	UPS	860	860		930	930	930	930	1,075					
Kongo-Central/ Mbanza-Ngungu	Ukongo		475	475					505			475	475	505
North Kivu/Gon	ULPGL		435	435					650			435	435	650
	ULPGL and Inst. Sup. des sciences infirmières progressiste de Grands Lacs		250 to 350	250 to 350								250 to 350	250 to 350	
	UCNK		320	320					320			320	320	320
North Kivu/Butembo	UCGB													
South Kivu/Bukavu	USA		968	968					1,200			968	968	1,200
	CUP	20		300 to 320					370/400	10 to 50		330 to 350	330 to 350	380 to 400

Source: authors, based on data from surveys carried out in 2019 as part of the *Private higher education and inequalities* project.

In addition to the minerval, a number of other services are chargeable. Some are payable to a university component, others directly to the 'providers' (teachers and agents); a third variety of fees is mixed. As in the public sector, the purchase of teaching aids can be a very lucrative personal *business* in large classes, as can the purchase of all forms, the cost of taking entrance tests, assistance with practical work or tutorials, access to appeal procedures (which are in great demand), work placement (fees payable to the tutor and work placement supervisor), examinations, end-of-study juries, the production of diplomas and their official recognition, etc. Some other payments are illegal.

This widespread situation in public institutions is not absent in the private sector, even implicitly. However, the historic denominational institutions and the new private institutions that claim excellence are trying to control costs.

"They offer "*all in one*" or "*all inclusive"* rates and staggered payments. However, this formula is difficult to impose on visiting teachers who are paid by the hour and who seek to sell their materials, demand "copyright" and offer the services of "their" assistants.

Why study at a public school?

All the IESP managers interviewed were unanimous on this point: "We recruit according to the instructions of the Ministry of Higher and University Education [MESU]". The IESPs must pay part of the fees collected from students into the MESU account in the form of "percentages" (Democratic Republic of Congo, Ministry of Higher and University Education, 2018). As we have said, this means that the figures must be treated with a degree of caution.

To "win over students", the IESPs put forward one or more arguments: firstly, the recruitment of "reputed professors" and their mobilisation under better conditions than those prevailing in the public institutions to which they are attached. Secondly, they recruit professors, usually Congolese, who live abroad.

A second argument for increasing use is the rationale of vertical integration observed in certain entrepreneurial-type IESPs. The URK, the UNH, the UMapon and the UNIC, for example, clearly fall into this category by offering primary and secondary schools, and even vocational schools, "bearing a label". These primary and secondary schools are very profitable and help to cover some of the costs of the sister university institution. Pupils at a school in the Mapon Foundation complex, for example, study for free and enjoy a free lunch every day.

Table 7.6 *Undergraduate and postgraduate fees at UCB, by heading (USD).*

Headings	G0 Architecture and others G1	G2- Dr, Eco, Info, Social and Envi.	G2 Agro & medecine	G3 - Law; econ, info and sc.	G3 - Agro and medicine	L1 - Law, economics, sciences and sc.	Ir1 Agronomy, L1 environnement	DOC1 en medecine	L2 Law, Eco & sciences info.	Ir2 Agronomy	Doc 2 and Doc3 in medecine	Doc 4 en medecine
Entry on the roll	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Student card	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Library subscription	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Minerval	539	522	574	540	724	734	814	945	907	995	1.015	1.035
Digital connectivity (*)	42											
Construction and mobility	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
MINESU operations	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
F.P.E.N. operations	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Session registration	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Diploma certification				75	75				75	75		75
Workshop costs												
Transcript of records	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Academic English	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
TOEFL												
Direction dissertation and TFC				90	90				150	150		150
Medical jury												150
Total	681	622	674	805	989	834	914	1.045	1.232	1.320	1.115	1.510

* Fees per year for a period of 5 years.
Source: *Université catholique de Bukavu, Étudier à l'UCB 2019-2020*, *The essential guide addressed to the students and staff*: 47.

The rationale of modernisation or *up-to-dateness* (imposing, modern facilities with state-of-the-art equipment for attractive courses), which plays on criticism levelled at the dilapidation of public HEIs, is often costly for the student. However, it presupposes that the institution has a professional niche and/or external support (ISSI), or that it has the capacity to recruit from afar, or even nationally. "We were attracted by the testimonies of our elders who study at Mapon University, about the quality of the laboratories, the modern buildings and the magnificent rooms" (Mapon University student, 2019). The testimonies of some UNH students were along the same lines: "the quality of the facilities and auditoriums, which make you forget that you are in the DRC when you compare them with the University of Lubumbashi, convinced me to come and study at New Horizons".

The location of the IESPs is another attractive factor. Insecurity in Kivu, for example, is an opportunity for UMapon in Maniéma, which organises admission tests in 9 towns across the country. The *Nande* business community in North Kivu, which supports local denominational universities, spares no expense in sending its children to study at distant institutions. UMapon has grasped the nettle, covering some of the travel costs of students recruited from afar and keeping its actual tuition fees relatively low at $350 a year.

These days, it is no exaggeration to say that there is no longer any form of public support for students, apart from a few rare facilities granted individually to particularly brilliant and/or 'needy' students (a term most frequently used in the language of academics). Students can no longer even really imagine a grant, whether statutory or, even less so, social. The few student aid mechanisms in the IESPs are often purely targeted assistance. Sometimes it is a matter of helping nationals, as is done, for example, by the UNC Kasugho in Goma, which gives all students from Kasugho study grants to cover the tuition fees.

UCC, UCB, UK, UCG, IUEFD and UPC offer a number of merit-based grants. The main purpose of these individual grants is to counter accusations of elitism and to ensure a certain quality of students. KIM University offers a 50% reduction in tuition fees for high-achieving students and offers a number of scholarships to Korea. The UEA in Bukavu offers remedial work to students in precarious situations. UNIC-CEPROMAD offers micro-credits to students' mothers by order of enrolment.

Conclusions and outlook

In the world's largest officially French-speaking country, where the population will double by 2050, and where the expected demographic transition has barely begun and remains uncertain, the proportion of young people in the population is at its peak. After stagnating between 2008 and 2014, growth in student numbers has resumed, more than doubling in less

than ten years. The number of institutions is growing even faster, especially in the private sector.

The increase in the number of young people and the rise in formal school enrolment rates in primary and secondary education have led to large numbers of people being enrolled in a school system that has no horizon other than secondary education, which itself remains very dilapidated, with little openness to the outside world and very little in the way of vocational training. This trend coincided with the collapse of the economy and the state (1990-2005), and has greatly intensified since then (2005-2010). In large parts of primary and secondary education, public schools have taken over. Everywhere, in both the private and public sectors, the running costs of schools and large parts of teachers' salaries are borne by families and young people. There is no form of public support for students such as grants, social assistance or low-interest loans, and the individual aid provided by the few IESPs is very limited.

In quantitative terms, the global surge in education does not yet seem to have produced the massive effects expected at higher education level. The growth in the number of students in higher education over the last 25 years has certainly been remarkable, but it is likely that the current system, which is very anachronistic and qualitatively weak, will very quickly be overtaken and overwhelmed by cohorts in a situation of 'stagnation' upstream of higher education or on 'elastic' pathways within higher education. The situation described here as a deceptive liberalisation and educational (non)governance of HE is undoubtedly on the verge of profound upheaval. The contemporary history of the DRC suggests, however, that we should be cautious in predicting their outcome, given the deep-rooted resilience of the 'corporations of the state', the ethos of deviation from the norm, and the opaque and tortuous ways in which the power of the client or user is exercised in the post-abidication state.

The development of the private higher education sector, which has been an integral part of school education from the outset, has not contributed in any way to the urgently needed *overhaul of* higher education. It has not led to reform or innovation. The overall quality of HE has in no way benefited from the stimulus of competition, emulation or specialisation.

It is no exaggeration to say that there is no real HE policy. The governance of funds is in no way substantive governance. The pedagogical model has remained largely arbitrary, anachronistic and without any form of accountability (transparency) at any level, with the exception of informal, individual negotiations and crisis measures taken during campus unrest. There is nothing to suggest that the expansion of private HEIs has improved the poor overall performance of HE. Above all, it has increased its absorption capacity for the benefit of the same players and made it possible to exploit new niches to deliver, for a fee, a kind of 'advanced literacy' which, according to official data, concerns less than one young person in ten. This only reinforces our feeling of imminent change in the face of the tsunami of young people waiting impatiently upstream or in the dead ends of the first cycle of higher education. These changes will

undoubtedly lead to increasing diversification in the quality and cost of education. However, until now, the differences in education costs between HEIs have not been considerably increased by the development of the private sector.

The expansion of the private sector has undoubtedly improved access to HE for certain groups: young girls in general, regions outside the school map, social groups on the outskirts of towns with no public transport. However, it is questionable whether the new public institutions are playing the same role. On the other hand, the development of the private sector has not reduced qualitative inequalities in terms of education and the value of qualifications, as there are no indicators to suggest that this is the case. Gains in access have often been achieved in fields of low quality or low added value. In our view, the growing enrolment of girls in HE has been driven by the proliferation of short vocational training institutes since 2007.

It is even more difficult to know whether the development of the private sector has produced new inequalities among young people in HE, because the initial frame of reference - a public (hybrid in reality) and elitist HE built for a few thousand young 'baccalaureate holders' guaranteed to occupy high positions in the national economy and politics or in the education system itself - no longer corresponds to any contemporary reality. However, deceptive liberalisation and public (non)governance of HE have not so far led to an explosion in educational inequality. While educational expatriation to Europe, the USA and the RSA - and above all successful educational expatriation - and access to the few expensive private denominational universities remain a privilege not exclusive to wealthy categories and families, these formulas only concern a small number of students (Poncelet & Solo Lola, 2016). The model embodied by the UCC and UPC in Kinshasa, which are denominational, expensive, relatively generalist, definitively accredited, strictly control access and have their own assets, resources and teaching plan, has not spread throughout the country and so far only concerns a few thousand very privileged students. And, in the absence of certain courses of study and, above all, their own research capacity, these institutions are still a long way from being able to lay claim to established, international university excellence.

Some very recent non-denominational private IESs, which are more entrepreneurial in nature, claim to offer excellence, professional management and a break with existing practices. They are also very selective on entry, with very high tuition fees, offer only strategic industrial or financial courses, and have their own resources and teaching plan. In this very recent field, UNH in Haut-Katanga and UMapon in Maniema are too recent for lessons to be learned. But, like the international joint ventures announced between private Congolese establishments and European business schools offering very expensive high-level vocational training ($14,000 to $15,000 a year for enrolment, often paid for by employers), these are undeniable indicators of the tectonic movements referred to above, which could radically and rapidly alter the current system of socio-

educational inequality and the hybrid institutional model whose resilience has continued to puzzle observers and the players themselves for more than three decades.

References

André, G., and Poncelet, M. (2013). "Héritage colonial et appropriation du pouvoir d'éduquer. Approche socio-historique de l'éducation primaire en RDC". *Cahiers de la Recherche sur l'Éducation et les savoirs*, nº 12, p. 271-295.

Brandt, C. O. (2017). *Illegibility as a State Effect. The limits of Governing Teachers Identification in the DRC* [Academish Proefschrift]. University of Amsterdam.

Catholic University of Congo (2017). *Programme d'études 2017-2018*. Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo. Kinshasa.

De Boeck, F. and Plissart, M.-F. (2005). *Kinshasa, récits de la ville invisible*. Brussels, La Renaissance du livre.

De Herdt, T. and Poncelet, M. (2010). *La reconstruction entre l'État et la société*, Paris, L'Harmattan.

De Herdt, T. and Poncelet, M. (2010). *Final report DIFID. Stakes and actors around the reduction of school fees in the DRC.* University of Antwerpen, Institute of Development Policy and Management.

De Herdt, T. and Titeca, K. (2016). Governance with Empty Pockets: The Education Sector in the Democratic Republic of Congo. *Development and Change*, vol. 47, nº 3, pp. 472-494. [https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12235].

De Herdt, T., Titeca, K. and Wagemakers, I. (2012). Make Schools, Not War? Donors' Rewriting of the Social Contract in the DRC. *Development Policy Review*, vol. 30, nº 6, pp. 681-701. [https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7679.2012.00594.x].

Englebert, P. (2000). *State legitimacy and development in Africa*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Gombaniro Rutashigwa, F. (2016). *L'implantation missionnaire au Congo-RDC : de l'assistance à l'autonomie financière. Une approche socio-historique"*, Thesis in development sociology, Paris I-IEDES Sorbonne.

Herbst, J., and Mills, G. (2013). "The invisible state", *Foreign Policy*, nº 201, p. 78-80.

Kalindye Byanjira D. and Tshibangu Tshishiku T. (2020). *Droit congolais de l'enseignement supérieur, universitaire et de la recherche scientifique de 1954 à ce jour*. République démocratique du Congo, Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et universitaire, Conseil d'administration des universités. Paris, L'Harmattan.

Lututala Mumpasi, B. (2002). *Pertinences et effets pervers de la privatisation de l'enseignement supérieur et universitaire en RDC*. Travaux et recherches de l'Université Kongo. Kinshasa.

Maindo M., Ngonga, A. and Kapagama Ikando P. (eds.). (2012). *L'université en chantier en RD Congo. Regards croisés sur la réforme de l'enseignement supérieur et universitaire.* Paris, Karthala.

Matundu, L. (1999). "Coopération universitaire et présentation des conflits dans l'Afrique des Grands Lacs". In *L'Afrique des grands lacs. Yearbook 1998-1999.* Paris : L'Harmattan.

Moshonas, S. (2018). *Power and the Policy-Making in DRC. The Politics of Human Resources Managment and Payroll Reforme*. IOB Working Paper 01.

Mpeve-Mpolo, A. (2012). *Les quatre tournants manqués de l'université congolaise. Analyse des réformes académiques du Congo-Zaïre*. Paris : L'Harmattan.

Mpiana Tshitenge and Jean-Pierre, J.-P. (2017). *L'université de Kinshasa à l'ère du partenariat éducatif* (vol. 1-1). Louvain-la-Neuve, Académia. L'Harmattan.

Mrsic Garac, S. (2009). « Les parents d'élèves face à la déliquescence du système éducatif congolais ». *Cahiers de la Recherche sur l'Éducation et les savoirs*, nº 8, p. 137-152.

Ndaywel è Nziem I. (ed. 2007). *L'Université dans le devenir de l'Afrique. Un demi-siècle de présence au Congo-Zaïre.* Paris, L'Harmattan-Cud_Ares-Ccd.

Oxford Department of international Development. (2016). *Oxford Poverty and Human Initiative. Country Briefing DRC*. University of Oxford.

Petit, P. (Dir.) (2010). *Civil society and education. Le partenariat éducatif à l'épreuve du terrain*. Louvain-la-Neuve. Academia-Bruylant.

Poncelet, M., André, G. and De Herdt, T. (2010). « La survie de l'école primaire congolaise (RDC) : Héritage colonial, hybridité et résilience ». *Autrepart*, vol. 2, nº 54, p. 23-41.

Poncelet, M. et al. (2015). « A la marge de l'internationalisation de l'enseignement supérieur… Mais au cœur d'un marché universitaire national : l'Université de Kinshasa (RDC) ». *Revue Tiers Monde*, nº 223, pp. 91-109.

Poncelet, M. and Kapagama Ikando, P. (2020). *Des inégalités éducatives à la mise en question de l'opposition pubic/privé dans l'enseignement supérieur congolais. Un défi documentaire.* Research paper no.º 162, AFD, Paris.

Poncelet, M. and Solo Lola, B. (2016). « Mikilistes nzete ya mobesu na tango ya moyi. Représentations et négociation des rapports avec les migrants dans les familles kinoises ». In *Villes connectées. Pratiques transnationales, dynamiques identitaires et diversité culturelle,* Presses universitaires de Liège, p. 59-82.

Pourtier, R. (2018). *La République démocratique du Congo face au défi démographique*. Paris. IFRI.

Democratic Republic of Congo, Ministry of Higher and University Education (2018). *Annuaire statistique de l'enseignement supérieur et universitaire 2015-2016*. Kinshasa.

Democratic Republic of the Congo Ministry of Planning, Institut National de la Statistique, UNICEF, USAid (2019), *MICS-Palu 2018, Rapport final RDC*. Kinshasa.

Democratic Republic of Congo, Ministry of Higher and University Education RDC (2021). *Annuaire statistique de l'Enseignement Supérieur et Universitaire, 2019-2020*. Kinshasa.

Democratic Republic of Congo. Ministry of Higher and University Education. Commission permanente des études (2010). *Programme des cours. Réforme de la table ronde des universités du Congo*. Éditions de la CPE. Kinshasa.

Schouten, P. (2021). *Violence and Fragmentation in Congo's Political Market-place* (Conflict Research Programme). London School of Economics.

Sesep N'sial, C. (2021). *L'école Congolaise. Héritages et défis.* Kinshasa. Éditions Espérance.

Trefon, T. (2013). *Congo, la mascarade de l'aide au développement*. Louvain-la-Neuve. Academia-L'Harmattan.

World Bank Africa Region (2005). *Le système éducatif de la république démocratique du Congo : Priorités et alternatives*.
World Bank. (2004). *DRC Country Status Report on Education. Priorities and Options for Regenerating the Education Sector*.
Yates, B. A. (1964). "African Reactions to Education: The Congolese-Case", *Comparative Education Review*, vol. 2, nº 15, pp. 158-171.
Young, C. and Turner, T. (1985). *The Rise and Decline of Zairian State*. The University of Wisconsin Press. Madison and London.