New Modes of Reproducing Social Inequality in Education: the changing role of parents, teachers, schools and educational policies

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Introduction

Since the first large-scale studies conducted in the 1950s and 1960s, one of the most consistent results in sociology of education research has been the existence of inequalities in school results and educational trajectories related to social factors. Sociologists have provided powerful explanatory models of social reproduction of inequalities through schooling. Those developed by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron in France (1970) or Basil Bernstein (1971) in England, influenced by Durkheim and Weber, have emphasised similarities and differences between cultural transmission in families from various social classes and social-class fractions and cultural transmission in schools. They have also analysed the role of schools in legitimating certain social practices. Marxist scholars such as Christian Baudelot and Roger Establet (1971) in France and Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) in the USA have underscored the correspondence between cultural transmission in schools and the requirements of blue-collar and white-collar employers and labour contexts. From still a different perspective, rational choice theorists have analysed inequalities as a result of cost–benefit analysis by individuals located at different points in the social scale (Boudon, 1973).

Forty or fifty years later, research studies still conclude that despite the increase in number of years of schooling for all children, educational inequalities continue to be transposed upwards and that in some countries the gap between the most advantaged and most disadvantaged has actually widened (Duru-Bellat, 2002). Analysis of results from recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) studies shows that European youngsters' level of educational attainment is very high compared to that of youngsters in emerging Latin American or African countries. However, in many European countries there are important differences between pupils with the best scores (level 5), very frequently from privileged backgrounds, and pupils with the worst scores (level 1),

associated with a low socio-economic status (SES) (Mons, 2004). Factors shown by previous studies to account for these differences are still at work, but many of them are influential in new ways. In addition to this, new factors have to be taken into account. Using available sociological literature on European countries, while focusing specifically on France as an exemplary case, this article presents some of the new constraints on and opportunities for action by parents, teachers and schools that result from both economic, cultural and educational changes and recent policy orientations.

New Contexts for Parental Action: who wins, who loses?

Parents have long been conceived by sociologists as major agents in the reproduction of social advantage through education. However, recent economic, cultural and educational changes have created new contexts for parental action inside and outside schools. These changes do not radically modify patterns of social-class advantage. However, they do create new conditions and possibilities for winning or losing at the educational game for various social-class fractions located at similar levels, introducing, for instance, a new balance between middle-class parents with high economic resources and those with high cultural resources, or between working-class 'nationals' and immigrants. This is another way of saying that given the fact that education is a positional good, educational inequalities have to be studied relationally because today, perhaps more sharply than in previous decades, what one group wins, another loses (Collins, 1979; Brown, 2003).

Globalisation, National Competition and Local Segregation: a dynamic view

Globalisation as opportunity or constraint. One main factor that will become more influential in the years to come but has only started to be explored in educational research is globalisation. Globalisation here means a general trend toward greater international interdependence and supra-national integration as fostered by the restructuring of capitalist economies, new and more rapid means of communication and organisational and political strategies, as well as by the development of more internationally conscious national communities (van Zanten, 2004a). As concerns schooling, international and supranational processes are presently most powerful and visible in higher education, but they will undoubtedly affect other educational levels as well to some extent in the near future. As most parental educational strategies in European countries have been embedded until now in national economies, cultures and educational systems, globalisation may appear a new constraint or opportunity for families of all social classes, leading them to develop new educational strategies.

It is essential to point out, however, that families do not have the same resources for enacting these strategies (Brown, 2000). In most countries, members of the bourgeois, cultural elite have for centuries been internationally oriented in cultural matters, through reading, studies and travel abroad and the mastery of two or three foreign languages. Similarly, the globalisation of capital has already long been integrated into the reproduction strategies of the bourgeois economic elite. In that sense, globalisation can be seen as an opportunity for the bourgeoisie and the upper classes to consolidate and increase their positional advantage in relation to the middle classes (Pinçon & Pinçon-Charlot, 1998). These groups are the best placed to profit from the internationalisation of higher education. This is particularly the case since international connections are already much more developed between prestigious institutions such as the 'Grandes Ecoles' in France and Oxbridge universities in England, which possess important economic, cultural and social resources, than between non-elite institutions.

For middle-class families, on the contrary, globalisation can be seen as a new constraint, but one that does not apply equally to all members of this large group. It can be seen as an opportunity for entrepreneurs, managers and professionals whose educational trajectories, professional careers and work are already internationally oriented, such as managers of international firms (Wagner, 1998). This is much less frequently the case for entrepreneurs, managers and professionals whose training, activity and professional networks are more nation-dependent, such as teachers, nurses or social workers, and also, to a lesser extent, certain types of lawyers, doctors and managers. However, because the middle classes generally have more economic, cultural and social resources

for becoming 'global' than the lower classes, they may perceive the matter of preparing for globalisation, through schooling in international schools for instance, as an opportunity to draw new barriers between themselves and the lower classes.

In most countries, the lower classes are nationally and even locally oriented in matters of work, culture or education, although in the French context this is changing at least for work due to national and international displacement of firms. These social categories are thus more likely to be disconnected from globalisation and either uninterested by or afraid of it. In a recent study I conducted with middle-class families and a smaller group of lower-class ones, it was members of the second group who were least likely to think that the teaching and learning of foreign languages in French schools had to be improved (van Zanten, 2002). However, there might be some important differences among lower-class groups, especially between 'nationals' and immigrants who speak several languages, are used to international mobility and whose potential for globalisation may lead them to see it as an opportunity. This should be the focus of further study.

Economic and cultural changes and competition between groups at the national level. Globalisation combines with different national situations of economic competition between social groups. Although the factors that play a role in this competition differ from one country to another, it is possible to see a common trend toward a weakening of the welfare state model and the social groups strongly linked to it, that is, professionals working in the public sector. This trend has led some sociologists, such as Pierre Bourdieu, to put forward the idea that in present post-industrial societies, these social groups can be considered a kind of 'new poor'. According to him, these groups, comprising mainly teachers and social workers, suffer not from 'poverty of condition', that is, lack of material resources, but from 'poverty of position', that is, social downgrading and lack of social esteem (Bourdieu,, 1993). Meanwhile, there is a social rise of new managers who must possess the new dispositions and skills required by new varieties of capitalism: mobility, flexibility, leadership and communication skills (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999).

This has important consequences for schooling. One is that traditional education, based on humanistic, content-oriented studies certified by qualified professionals, is not perceived as favourably as in the past by all middle-class and upper-class parents. It is still regarded highly by middle-class parents with high cultural resources who want their children to become civil servants in the public sector, where school certifications and general culture are still valuable assets. Nevertheless, middle-class parents whose position depends more on economic resources and who want their children to work in the private sector are presently putting pressure on schools to develop a more instrumental approach. They want schools to teach skills and *habitus* useful in all kinds of social situations including recruitment interviews, as well as to transmit knowledge (Gombert & van Zanten, 2004). In addition to intensifying this tension within the upper and middle classes, these changes may reinforce the distance between upper- and middle-class children and children from the lower classes in a different, more insidious way than the traditional curriculum. Whereas previous predominance of 'encyclopaedism', emphasis on subject matter and considerable distance between teachers and the taught in French secondary schools was a source of inequality between children from these respective backgrounds (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970), the changes being promoted by parents from the private sector might prove even more discriminating against lower-class children. The focus on skills rather than subject matter and on ongoing evaluation rather than examinations may well constitute a renewed form of integrated code using an 'invisible pedagogy' that handicaps pupils with less cultural and information capital (Bernstein, 1975).

Changes in the cultural function of the school may also alter the positions of different social groups in European countries. For at least a century, that is, from the end of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth, the school, having replaced the church as the main socialising agency, extended its monopoly in the cultural domain through the growth of compulsory education, the professionalisation of teachers and the development of a uniform school curriculum. However, this situation has changed in the last thirty years. On the one hand, children stay in school longer than before, but parents have to make increasing use of extra-educational resources such as private tutoring or various learning aids in order to help them remain engaged in their studies and improve their performance in a more competitive school and job market. On the other hand, increased use

of these learning aids and, more generally, the development of new cultural transmission media, especially television and Internet, present new challenges to school culture.

This has several implications, whose combined effect is difficult to assess at present, particularly in the absence of a consistent bulk of research. From one perspective, these changes can be seen as creating more opportunities for culturally endowed parents to use those cultural resources at home with their children and influence their children's leisure activities in certain cultural directions that will increase their educational advantages. From another perspective, however, it gives more power to parents who have the financial resources to pay for more expensive technological equipment and devices and more expensive tutoring and leisure activities. In general, it is possible to analyse these developments as a delegitimising of those upper- and middle-class groups associated with traditional text-based knowledge, teachers of course, but also various kinds of intellectual white-collar workers, and in favour of upper- and middle-class groups oriented toward decision-making, management and technical tasks. In any case, it is clear that although lower-class children are very influenced by television and new technologies, their parents frequently lack the cultural and financial resources to use these media as educational resources. The erosion of the school-culture monopoly may thus work to maintain and even increase their disadvantage.

Urban mobility and segregation. Another dimension concerning constraints and opportunities for parents of different social groups has to do with living environment and its impact on education and schooling. In many European countries, most of the population lives in cities that have undergone profound changes in the last thirty years. One of those changes concerns mobility and social and ethnic mix, which have two important effects on education. The first has to do with the social environment in the neighbourhoods and schools children grow up in. This social environment can be conceived as a form of individual and collective social capital (Bourdieu, 1980; Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001). Although research is scarce on this subject, what research there is shows that the social and ethnic composition of neighbourhoods has an impact on child socialisation (Maurin, 2004). The impact of the social and ethnic composition of schools and classrooms is much more fully documented (Coleman, 1966; Duru-Bellat et al, 2004). The second effect has to do with access to different educational institutions by location. Location is important because even if there is good public transportation or parents can drive their children to school, they generally prefer children and young adolescents to go to school near home, to be able to oversee their friends and activities. Furthermore, location is particularly important in countries such as France where there is no free choice of schools and children are assigned to schools by place of residence.

Research clearly shows that in most big European cities, social groups are not distributed evenly across neighbourhoods, although there are highly contrasting segregation patterns In France, specifically in Paris and the Parisian periphery, several studies have shown that the bourgeoisie has consolidated and even reinforced its presence in a limited number of residential areas inside and outside Paris. It is in fact the most concentrated social group, but as segregation is usually conceived as an involuntary process associated with various forms of inequality and exclusion, it is better in this case to speak of 'aggregation', that is, a voluntary process associated with various benefits. Among the benefits of social concentration in the case of the bourgeoisie, is the accumulation of economic and cultural capital, which creates very valuable social capital in neighbourhoods and schools for its members. There is also easy access to the most prestigious public and private schools, which goes along with its capacity as the numerically and socially dominant local group to control the functioning of these schools (Pinçon & Pinçon-Charlot, 1989).

At the other end of the social spectrum, urban studies have shown that lower-class groups have been driven out of big European cities because of the rise in housing market prices and development of business districts. In Paris, the working class has been forced to move to the urban periphery north and east of the city. For the more distant groups, who are frequently either the poorest or those who wanted more space and their own house, this has created new constraints as concerns access to work and different services, including schools. In this connection there are important differences between French and immigrant workers. The first are more likely to move to far-away areas while the second, because of both job profile and concentration in social housing, have remained in the nearby periphery. Although living closer to the city means access to a wider range of services including schools – which may partly account for the higher aspirations and better

school careers of immigrant working-class children when compared to French working-class children (Vallet & Caille, 1996) – it also has important disadvantages, related to high concentration of lower-class and immigrant children in neighbourhoods and schools of the urban periphery, which in turn leads to a kind of socialisation inside and outside schools that can be characterised as 'peripheral' in more than a geographical sense (van Zanten, 2001). This socialisation is characterised by externally imposed social closure, limited economic and cultural resources and therefore scarce social capital in terms both of aspirations and values, and social networks.

The departure of the lower classes from city centres has also been provoked by the arrival of pioneer middle-class groups which has in turn stimulated this process for following, less risk-taking, middle-class groups. Altogether these groups have encouraged a process of 'gentrification', that is, the transformation of old, lower-class and industrial areas into settings adapted to middle-class interests and tastes, through changes in housing, town planning, commercial and cultural services (Butler with Robson, 2003). However, this process cannot in many cases lead to complete social closure as there is a need for workers in the service industry in cities, and these are more and more migrant lower-class workers. While these workers are frequently segregated within some areas, they are also spread throughout the cities. The implication of this is that in cities, and especially in city schools, but to an extent that varies within categories and localities, the middle classes are faced with social and ethnic mix. This mix is valued by some of its members, at least rhetorically, but it is more frequently perceived as a constraint and even a threat to the reproduction of their social advantage through education (van Zanten, 2003). That is why middle-class parents develop a series of more subtle closure strategies, partly described below. At the same time, such urban mix can be analysed as an opportunity for the lower-class groups who have stayed inside big cities, especially immigrants, more likely to work in certain sectors of the service industry such as small shops or restaurants. Indeed, mix of this sort can increase the economic, cultural and social resources in their nearby environment and thus have an impact on their aspirations and choices.

The Impact of Policy on Parents' Views and Strategies: hopes and threats

Comprehensivisation and positive discrimination as unlocking political strategies. In analysing new contexts for parental action, it is also necessary to focus on the effects of the main trends in educational policy. An important dimension in this respect is the 'comprehensivisation' of school systems. This process, which has entailed the creation of a common middle secondary school and concerns all European educational systems in various degrees, has had contrasting effects. On the one hand, it can be seen as an important opportunity for lower-class groups to improve their educational and social position. Research studies in different countries have shown that 'comprehensivisation' is not equivalent to real democratisation of education, which implies that all groups have access to the same educational quality and obtain comparable educational results. Nevertheless, as the same studies have also shown, it has certainly increased the probability of getting a better, longer education for the most disadvantaged groups. Although for school performance and careers immigrants are still located at the bottom, in many countries they seem to be the group to have benefited most from this process in the last thirty years, perhaps because they are more disposed than established 'national' or minority groups to believe in and take advantage of new opportunities (Ogbu, 1987; van Zanten, 1997).

It is important to note that in many countries 'comprehensivisation' has been accompanied by different forms of positive discrimination in favour of lower-class and immigrant pupils. This policy orientation is in principle geared toward greater equality and has undoubtedly in many cases limited some of the most material, visible causes of educational inequality. In practice, however, positive discrimination has had some undesirable, negative effects. One of the most important, at least in countries such as France where positive discrimination has been applied on a territorial basis, is that 'positive discrimination' schools have remained academically, socially and ethnically segregated. They have even, in some cases, become even more so, as the label 'positive discrimination' has encouraged white-middle-class flight. This has prevented the policy from being as effective as it should have been: segregation has limited the scholastic progress of lower-class children for the reasons discussed above (Meuret, 1994; Caille, 2001). Another negative effect, which concerns both territorially and individually based positive discrimination measures, is that it

has benefited the less 'problematic' lower-class and immigrant children. This is due to the fact that, as in many other social policies of this kind, teachers, parents and pupils themselves have contributed to various forms of selection and self-selection of 'deserving' pupils.

On the other hand, predictably, policies of 'comprehensivisation' and positive discrimination have also been perceived as a constraint and even a threat to social closure through education by middle- and upper-class parents (Parkin, 1974; Murphy, 1988), especially by those parents whose children go to socially and ethnically mixed schools. English and French research shows, for instance, that these policies have fostered middle-class parents' anxiety about the quality of education in urban secondary schools. These parents are afraid that teachers will adapt school programmes and educational pace to those children and that discipline and social problems will take time away from teaching and learning in the classrooms (Ball & Vincent, 2001). They also tend to see lower-class and immigrant children as not very valuable friends for their children and as potential bad influences as concerns schoolwork and the acquisition of social habits (Gewirtz et al, 1995; van Zanten, 2003). On the contrary, it is significant that German middle-class parents seem much less anxious about the effects of social composition on learning and socialisation. This is so because they can still rely on the institutional division provided by the system to sort out pupils on an academic and social basis, although this is changing in cities like Berlin with the arrival of a growing proportion of immigrant pupils into *gymnasien* (Flitner, 2004).

School choices as main individual closure strategies. Furthermore, the positive impact of comprehensivisation and positive discrimination on equality has in many cases been limited by the simultaneous introduction in many countries of parental school choice, or reinforcement where it already existed. Even in countries such as France and Spain where there is no official national support for school choice, the existence of a large, strongly subsidised but weakly controlled private sector has provided important possibilities for choice in recent years. In the French case, it is necessary to add the development of options that are not equally distributed in all schools and the existence of measures for being exempted from official regulations prohibiting choice; namely, by citing these options or other family factors. In fact, in order to consider all the possibilities and implications of choice, it is necessary to take into account four major strategies open to parents to various degrees in different countries: residential choice linked to school choice, choice of the private sector, choice within the public sector and 'colonisation' of local public schools. The last of these implies that parents who stay are not just 'loyal' in Hirschman's (1970) sense, but attempt to control the functioning of local schools through individual demands and pressures and collective participation in parents' associations (van Zanten, 2006).

Research on choice shows that because these strategies suppose parents' economic, cultural and social resources, they tend to be used much more frequently by upper and middle-class parents and thus increase the advantages of the already advantaged (Walford, 1992). As for the other dimensions that we have been discussing in this paper, there might be more subtle differences between social groups. It is possible, for instance, to argue that there has been no significant change in the strategies and position of upper-class groups as a result of the official and 'grass-roots' extension of school choice. These groups have always used elite private schools extensively and had access to the best-reputed public schools through residential segregation. Rather than develop 'closure' strategies through choice, they are more inclined to develop 'conquering' strategies, which they deploy presently at an international scale. I have observed in France, however, that some members of this group, located in specific more mixed school contexts, may feel threatened by offensive strategies from some middle-class groups and develop new distinctive strategies such as putting pressure on elite private and public schools to develop specific high-ability classes (van Zanten, 2002).

Although middle-class parents are the most inclined to use choice as a closure strategy, it is difficult to assert its consequences for them. School choice has certainly meant greater opportunities for educational and social mobility for families who want and are able to take more risks, but also a greater investment, both personal and financial, more anxiety and more guilt for many others (Ball, 2002). Parents who want to gain access to the best schools must spend more time choosing schools and developing successful strategies to get their children into them and more money on private lessons or psychological help so that their children can meet the school requirements and get by in competitive environments. They may also be torn between pushing for

their children's success and making sure they are happy (Coldron & Boulton, 1991) or feel guilty about the effects of their action on social segregation (van Zanten, 2003). Choice also gives different advantages to different middle-class groups: those who have more financial assets can use the private sector more extensively and provide more extra-school support; those who have more cultural capital, especially teachers, can get more information about schools and better prepare their children to get into them and to succeed; while those who have more social capital can use it to gain access to the best schools (Wong, 2004). It is difficult, however, in the absence of longitudinal quantitative studies, to evaluate if choice is really an important element in 'upgrading' the school careers of middle-class children, although it certainly appears to have played a role (Power et al, 2003; Devine, 2004).

Lower-class families are at a disadvantage in the choice game not only because they lack the financial, cultural and capital resources necessary to make the best choices, but also because, in many cases, they do not want to choose (Broccolichi & van Zanten, 2000). This is so for various reasons, such as their perception of the school as a homogeneous public service, respect of teachers' judgement and advice, attachment to localities and local schools. This is even truer for immigrant families, who frequently have little information on policy changes and opportunities and who, likely to feel that they are 'illegitimate' citizens, are afraid of infringing upon school regulations (van Zanten, 2001). At the same time, lower-class pupils and families are victims of middle-class choices that increase the already very high levels of academic, social and ethnic segregation in the schools they are enrolled in. Should these groups be then encouraged to choose to get away from segregated residential and school environments and their potential negative effects? Some American research shows that giving incentives to poor families to choose, while limiting choice through quota parts from other social groups, might be more advantageous to lower-class groups. It is not certain, however, that lower-class children fit easily into middle-class schools (Wells, 1998), and this system may prove inapplicable in other countries, such as France, because there is strong resistance to any kind of 'affirmative action' on an ethnic basis.

New Contexts for Teachers' and School Action: the effects of autonomy and control

Although parents have come to play an essential role not just in children's education at home and outside schools but also in the schooling process itself, they are not the only agents that contribute to the transformation of reproduction modes in the educational field. Teachers and schools are important too, and they have also undergone significant changes. These changes are related in part to changes in sociological perceptions: certain factors, such as organisational and social composition factors or teachers' work patterns and conditions neglected before due to theoretical and methodological focus, have now come to the fore. However, these changes are also real. Some of them result from processes described above such as segregation resulting from residential choice and constraints, but many others are related either to the internal functioning of schools and teachers' practices or to new policies that aim to modify school organisation or teachers' work.

Teachers and Schools: the importance of organisation and social mix

School effectiveness and school mix. Up to the 1970s, teachers' role in increasing or reducing inequality was analysed mostly by studying the relationship between their social-class or ethnic origin and educational practice and ideology, or teacher–pupil relationships. Important attention was also given to the extent to which school curriculum reflected middle-class, white culture. Anthropologists and sociologists of education developed powerful cultural and structural theories to account for the educational failure of lower-class and ethnic minority children faced with school and teacher expectations, conceptions of knowledge, methods and manners all very different to those of their home and parents. New teacher training programmes and curricula were developed to reduce what was perceived mainly as a 'distance' problem between knowledge and teacher on the one side, learner on the other. Much less attention was given to the internal functioning of schools, although a large body of not very rigorous research was developed on urban schools, especially in the USA (Henriot-van Zanten, 1991; Henriot-van Zanten & Anderson-Levitt, 1992).

Since then, however, more attention has been given to these factors and their impact on equality and inequality among pupils. Research on 'effective schools' has shown, for instance, that some schools are more successful than others in helping children learn and that this 'effectiveness' is related to certain organisational characteristics, such as good pedagogical leadership by principals and head teachers or the existence of teachers' collaborative cultures. Research has also shown that effective schools are characterised by a collective ideology centred on learning and based on the hypothesis or belief that all children can learn. Studies of this kind also insist on the positive role of pupils themselves when they have high academic expectations and judge their classmates and even form friendships using academic criteria. These results have been used in several countries to design programmes to help lower-class and ethnic minority schools improve their performance.

Nevertheless, research has also shown that there are important limitations to improvement in these schools and that pedagogical and organisational effectiveness are in fact strongly related to school intake or school-mix effects. What this means is that the concentration of academically and socially disadvantaged children in certain schools and in certain tracks or classes within schools tends to produce effects in terms of teaching and learning that cannot be totally, or even to a great extent, counteracted by professional involvement and organisational arrangements (Thrupp, 1999). These effects are related to the development of teachers' practices and ideologies in segregated contexts. While in heterogeneous contexts teachers tend to adapt their teaching to fit the 'average' pupil, in homogeneous, low-achieving classrooms, they over-adapt to pupil intake, providing a more limited, less challenging curriculum and fewer, less ambitious evaluations of pupils' work. Teachers also tend to adjust their professional ideologies to school contexts, moving from an instrumental focus on learning in average or 'good' schools to an expressive focus on interpersonal relationships in schools with a concentration of low-achieving pupils (van Zanten, 1996). While this expressive focus is necessary both in itself and as a lever to motivate these learners, what has been observed in many lower-class, ethnically segregated schools is that teachers tend to move from an egalitarian to a humanitarian ideal where inclusion and compassion, but not equality, become key elements (Grospiron & van Zanten, 2001).

School competition. Segregation among schools, partly the consequence of the urban segregation patterns and parental school flight evoked before but also resulting from competition among schools, is thus an essential factor to be taken into account. This competition is related to increasing school autonomy, which, in the absence of a clear egalitarian ideal and the presence of strong pressure on schools to become more effective, leads to competitive rather than collaborative relations between them. Competition can be encouraged as an explicit mode of market regulation, as in the English system, or in more discreet ways, as in France. It can also merely be tolerated or even formally discouraged, but it appears as a central process in many educational systems, especially in urban areas because of the number of schools, their nearness and their frequent hierarchical ordering on a scale of performance and attractiveness. In a recent European research project entitled 'Changes in regulation modes and social production of inequalities in European educational systems' and covering six local spaces in five countries (France, Belgium, England, Hungary and Portugal), it was found that in all settings except perhaps in the Portuguese city there was strong competition between schools (Maroy, 2006). This competition led schools to adapt school provision, curriculum, classroom organisation and even disciplinary practices not only to pupil intake but also to the practices of other schools, either through imitation or specialisation and niche creation.

However, like previous research conducted in England or France (Gewirtz et al, 1995; Ball & van Zanten 1998), this research also concludes that schools are not affected by other schools in the same ways. The impact of the surrounding institutional environment on a given school's functioning is in fact strongly related to two main factors. The first is school reputation, which is strongly linked to pupil intake and pupil performance. The second is degree of competition in the local area, which is linked to demographic factors, parental strategies and local policies concerning school choice and autonomy. These are objective factors but they are not always perfectly perceived or used by schools as a basis for developing strategies. This means that in some cases there is a gap between the objective situation of the school and the external and internal strategies developed by school personnel (Delvaux & van Zanten, 2004).

At the top, schools that have a good, well-established reputation and are located in a stable, closed school market are hardly affected by competition. Their main strategy consists in maintaining the external and internal factors that have created their reputation, such as selection, strong learning expectations or severe discipline. Schools with a good reputation that start losing pupils will develop 'conquering strategies', that is, entrepreneurial, externally oriented practices. They will focus on developing attractive school provision and on 'scanning' the potential market, sometimes neglecting internal pressures (Bagley et al, 1996). Further down on the reputation scale, academically and socially heterogeneous schools will frequently try both to cater to pupils with learning needs and remain attractive to middle-class parents. This might lead, in some extreme cases, to bipolarity, that is, strong segregation of school provision, with special classes for children with learning difficulties and special classes for high-ability students. Some of these schools may select lower-class failing or average pupils on a behavioural basis and some may concentrate almost entirely on the success of middle-class 'good' pupils. At the bottom, 'ghetto' schools will frequently adopt a position of retreat from the local market and focus mainly on helping children with learning problems and limiting discipline problems through expulsions and suspensions, specific procedures and therapeutic interventions.

It is important to note, however, that these adaptations also depend on the internal organisation of schools, another factor that must be taken into account. In some schools, there is a strong consensus on a similar value orientation (whether it be elitist, performance-oriented, entrepreneurial, expressive, social …) among head teachers, teachers and parents (Power et al, 2003). This is more frequent in private schools, especially in countries such as France and Belgium, because of the existence of a strong moral Catholic ethos but also because of patterns of teacher recruitment and pupil selection (Ball & Maroy, 2004). In other schools, on the contrary, there are strong divisions between head teachers and teachers. Very frequently this is related to the fact that head teachers are externally oriented, focusing mainly on pupil intake, school provision and school promotion, while teachers are internally oriented, focusing on teaching and discipline. Teachers act in this way because of their professional orientation towards the classroom, but also because they are against competitive ethics and behaviour or because they prefer to leave this 'dirty work' to school directors and ignore the impact of the local environment (Hughes, 1958; Ball & van Zanten, 1998). Parents participate in these processes in various ways, becoming allies of head teachers or teachers, or enemies of both. For instance, in the European research, schools that had succeeded in changing their social mix had done so with parents' help. This also has an important effect on equality and inequality in schools, as research shows that 'ineffective' schools are frequently characterised by anomie, tension or conflict among different actors.

Educational Policies: external control and personal responsibility

Efficiency and accountability. Not everything that goes on inside a school can be related to its intake or institutional environment. As is the case for changes in parental strategies, many of the changes in teacher and school practices can be traced back to changes in education policy. It is of course not possible to explore here all policies that have an impact on equality and inequality patterns; three that seem to have major effects will be briefly analysed. The first is focus on efficiency, school performance, evaluation and accountability. This focus is observable in many countries, but rationale and procedures for implementation may vary by national ideologies, organisational structures and characteristics of administrative personnel. In countries such as France, evaluation and accountability have meant a shift in state control from process to product evaluation (Broadfoot, 1996). Nevertheless, contrary to other countries such as England, product evaluation is not used to sanction teachers, propose specific procedures to schools, or construct 'best practice' models that all schools must follow. It serves mainly to inculcate a 'culture of evaluation' in school personnel and hold a 'mirror' for them to improve on their own (Thélot, 1993; Pons, 2004). The emphasis on efficiency and accountability has also implied a shift from direct normative regulation through national directives, teacher training and inspection to a more indirect, normative type of regulation through projects, contracts and personal responsibility. Moreover, parents have been brought into the process of overseeing schools through league tables and participation in school councils.

Some research studies show that these policy changes seem to have been able to render educational professionals more conscious about inequalities and help them improve their practice. There are, however, a number of problems in the way these policies are applied. One main problem is the creation of feelings of guilt and discouragement among many education professionals, especially those working in 'failing schools', when they are not able to improve their pupil performance because of the various dimensions mentioned above. Although there are no material sanctions, the present French mode of regulation tends to reinforce feelings of being professionally inadequate. This is the result of giving teachers and school personnel a great deal of apparent freedom to innovate and adapt to local conditions but preventing them from actually doing so by lack of training, professional accompaniment and bureaucratic control. In addition to this, moral guilt is reinforced by a political and administrative discourse that emphasises personal responsibility for success and failure much more than collective, organisational and political responsibility – perhaps even more so as policies are increasingly less integrated in a coherent political framework.

Another problem is that, as in England, external surveillance encourages schools and teachers to put up a 'good image' in terms of performance and practice. They do so by concentrating on the progress of some pupil categories only, that is, those than can improve, or by having less strict practices concerning grading and passing pupils up from one year to the next (Ball, 1997). A third problem still has to do with the alteration of relations between educational professionals. In many schools, head teachers and teachers no longer see each other as colleagues, but as occupying distinct hierarchical positions, the first very much oriented toward external demands and control and the second toward internal tasks and improvement. The relation of both groups to parents is also potentially conflicting. This is due to the fact that parents, especially middle-class and upper-class parents, in uncooperative school climates, may seize on policies of evaluation and accountability to satisfy their individual interests or the collective interest of their social group (van Zanten, 2002).

Decentralisation. Another main policy change concerning the external and internal control on schools and teachers has to do with processes of educational decentralisation. Decentralisation is a tricky word. It is used to cover a variety of political and administrative changes such as school autonomy, devolution of new responsibilities to local-level administrations or redistribution of power between national states, regions and municipalities. It is also legitimised through a heterogeneous political rhetoric ranging from the promotion of local diversity, enlarged participation and grass-roots democracy to that of local autonomy of schools, school restructuring and school effectiveness. The first type of justifications is used in countries like Spain, Portugal and to a lesser extent France, where decentralisation has been a political and administrative process of devolution of educational responsibilities to regions and municipalities. The second type of justifications is more common in systems that have already been decentralised on a territorial basis like England, where decentralisation has meant mostly devolution of responsibilities to schools.

There are, however, dimensions common to both processes. The first has to do with the role of the state, which is not weakened but becomes more legitimate and, in some countries, stronger than before through its capacity to steer the system at a distance, leaving responsibility for implementation and results to the local level (Weiler, 1990). The second has to do with a move from institutionally established procedures at the national or intermediate levels towards arrangements and conventions between individual agents and pressure groups at the local level. One of the main consequences of this is the reduced power of teacher unions or parents' associations and the erosion of established rules of participation and control, in favour of idiosyncratic arrangements among parents, teachers and head teachers and among schools. In fact, decentralisation is not just a specific policy orientation but a much more general restructuring of state/civil society relations (Popkewitz, 2000).

But does decentralisation impact on equality or inequality? Recent research shows that there is no simple relationship between degree of decentralisation and equality of performances across the countries that participated in the PISA evaluation (Mons, 2004). This is due to at least two factors. The first is that decentralisation concerns different domains in different countries, and it appears that some types of decentralisation are more related to inequalities among pupils than others. The second is that decentralisation implementation can vary substantially within the same

country, within regions and municipalities and within schools by political factors, administrative organisation, teachers' compliance or resistance. In France, a global overview shows that the decentralisation implementation process has been slow and quite limited. However, analysis of specific schools, municipalities, *départements* or regions show that some of them are operating in an extra-legal perspective as they have developed projects and activities that go well beyond present laws and regulations. These are in general educational institutions or political bodies with important economic and social resources. Therefore their actions might lead to an increase of inter-school and inter-territorial inequalities. Other problems that might have an impact on inequality in France are lack of effective participation of organised groups of teachers and parents in the decentralisation process and lack of effective control and coordination by local and national educational authorities (van Zanten, 2004b).

Professionalisation and deprofessionalisation. A third policy trend that is important to mention concerning inequality is the professionalisation or deprofessionalisation of the teaching profession across different countries. As for decentralisation, discourses on professionalisation that circulate internationally seem to cross ideological positions: in classic liberal discourses professionalisation is related to autonomy; in progressive ones, to empowerment (Popkewitz, 2000). It is perhaps possible to see in this contradiction a global process of deprofessionalisation and reprofessionalisation (Seddon, 2000). Positive discourses on teachers' professionalism can be seen as attempts to rehabilitate teachers' work in the face of reforms that have tended to be responses to distrust and criticism from parents, head teachers and local and national educational authorities. These positive discourses have come from educational decision-makers but also educational researchers in many countries who have insisted on teachers' capacity to act as 'reflective practitioners' or develop a sense of collegial responsibility (Schön, 1983, Talbert & McLauglin, 1996). It is important to add that in some countries, such as France, teacher unions have used the term to provide a stronger link between their demands for better salaries, better working conditions and better training and a modern image of the teaching occupation.

However, some discourses on teacher professionalisation are in fact subtle ways of introducing new managerial modes of control. This is the case of some of the discourses focusing on cooperation, which, when they come from the administration, are perceived by teachers as forms of 'contrived collegiality' (Hargreaves, 1992). This perception is not totally erroneous, as in France, at least, it is by introducing various arrangements and activities implying collective work that the government and administration have tried to put more pressure on teachers to obtain better results more quickly. This managerial tendency is also present in the link proposed by some policy-makers, administrators and head teachers in France between professionalisation and teachers' acquisition of new skills, through initial or on-the-job training, that will allow them to adapt to different working environments and especially to 'difficult' schools. All this points to a reduction of professional autonomy, at least as it was traditionally conceived, and thus to some kind of deprofessionalisation. And there are other, more objective indicators of deprofessionalisation in several European countries, such as the reduction or stagnation of teacher salaries and the development of part-time work where it was not the norm before. There is no clear relationship between this policy trend and equality, but it is probable that teachers' feelings of being instrumentalised, scrutinised and expected to adapt to specific school contexts contributes to the blurring of a common professional ethic, a notion strongly related to the equality ideal in many countries (Gewirtz, 2002).

It is important to note that this new trend towards 'deprofessionalisation', or at least some of its dimensions, may not be as unfavourably perceived by young teachers as by their older colleagues. Recent research shows that many young French teachers no longer share the feeling of belonging to the same profession. They tend to perceive teaching as a very segmented profession, according to level of teaching, pupil intake and type of school. They do not believe that they can carry skills and techniques developed in one segment over to another and they are thus more receptive to discourses about adaptation and flexibility. Nor do these young teachers believe that large, all-encompassing teacher unions can represent teachers' very diverse points of view on the profession. They are in favour of multiple teacher unions and pressure groups defending plural interests. Furthermore, they do not think that global national reforms can fundamentally change

the educational system and are instead in favour of decentralised, local reforms and innovations (Rayou & van Zanten, 2004).

Conclusion

To put various threads together, it is important to summarise the conclusions that can be drawn from the two sections of this paper. The first section was concerned with changes in the structure of opportunity for parents both outside and inside school. If we look at the hierarchy between upper-, middle- and lower-class pupils, the global picture of social advantage in education remains similar to what it was in the past. This paper has insisted, however, on tensions and changes between categories within each group. One tension concerns power relations between intellectual and public professionals and executives on one side, private-sector managers and executives on the other. In France, the former group long occupied the foreground in matters of education, but it seems the latter is overpowering it. It is nevertheless difficult to know if this due only to the relative erosion of cultural capital and growing importance of economic capital in schooling or is also the result of a change in sociological perspective. Another tension concerns the relative advantages and disadvantages of the 'national' and 'immigrant' groups located at the bottom of the class structure. Although immigrant groups suffer much more from discrimination than 'national' ones, some of their characteristics, such as higher aspirations or place of residence, may contribute to better school careers for their children in the end.

The paper also documented some new routes to social advantage or disadvantage for all social groups, such as globalisation, economic and cultural competition and urban mobility and segregation. The relationship between changes in these areas and in education is essential, but needs to be explored further. I have also insisted on the fact that the space of possibilities has grown for the lower classes, through these processes and policies explicitly aimed to help them, such as comprehensivisation and positive discrimination. Nevertheless, I have also tried to show that subtler closure mechanisms are simultaneously being developed by the middle and upper classes either at their own initiative or in relation to policy, first among them, school choice.

The second section analysed changes in teachers' work and schools. The overall picture is of teachers and schools contributing to processes of social reproduction of educational inequalities through various mechanisms and mostly involuntarily. In addition to dimensions already studied and discussed in previous sociological literature, such as social-class based expectations, curriculum and teacher styles, this paper has insisted on the importance of social mix and school competition. Although research shows that some schools are more effective and more equalising than others, the factors leading to a reduction in the gap between lower-class and middle- and upper-class children are much more frequently present in schools where the majority of the student body is of middle- or upper-class background. This means that while failing schools attended primarily by students of lower-class background can make some progress thanks to pedagogical and organisational change, real improvement will come mainly from changes in the social and ethnic composition of schools. I have also insisted on the fact that school competition may also affect school functioning in ways that are detrimental to students' learning, either because school personnel neglect children with learning difficulties because of external pressures or because they over-adapt to their supposed problems and needs.

Policy has introduced important changes in school administration and organisation and in teachers' work in many countries. The overall picture seems to be a considerable increase in external, supposedly objective, control over schools. This is not true in all national contexts. In France, such control is weak both because there are strong resistances against product evaluation and material sanctions or offensive interventions not only from teachers but also from administrators and policy-makers and because decentralisation has created new problems of coordination at the local level. The situation is not necessarily better in systems that have introduced more directive forms of control, however, as schools then tend to develop 'impression management' techniques to give a flattering image of themselves. The overall picture also seems to be of more internal, indirect and subjective control of teachers' work. This has encountered some resistance from teachers, though it is much stronger among older than younger ones. It has also

generated feelings of discouragement and diminishing morale among teachers and may lead them to be less willing to fight against inequalities.

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