RECENT TRENDS IN PORTUGUESE HIGHER EDUCATION: CLOSURE, USURPATION AND DIFFERENTIATION

MARIA MANUEL VIEIRA DA FONSECA

Abstract – *In Portugal, the demand for higher education intensified during the sixties and continued to increase during the following years in such a way that mechanisms of control over access have been imposed since 1976. The most important of these mechanisms has been the numerus clausus. Faced with the implacable verdict of the numerus clausus and with the exclusionary perspectives it generates, each social class began to produce a new range of educational strategies in response to the increasing competition for educational credentials. The aim of this paper is to capture and to interpret those practices of social differentiation, taking as the main theoretical references both the weberian concept of 'social closure' as developed by Frank Parkin (1979) and the concept of 'strategies of social reproduction' (Bourdieu, Boltanski and Saint-Martin 1978). By using the available statistical data on higher education – namely the figures published by the National Bureau of Statistics and by the Department of Statistics of the Ministry of Education, besides data included in some recent studies about university students – we intend to portray some of the strategies of exclusion and usurpation produced in this field which form, at present, an important part of the broader set of practices performed by social classes in their struggle for social positions.*

Introduction

$\mathcal{T}$he education arena is today without doubt one in which classes and various class fractions compete extremely vigorously, communicate intensely, and persistently develop practices aimed at defending or conquering a place in the social structure. The imposition of a minimum level of schooling, in force since the nineteenth century in the majority of Western countries, and the recent raising of the school-leaving age, which is the fruit of prolonged social struggles, has transformed the school career with a recognised qualification into an indispensable factor for social identity and recognised citizenship; it is regarded, in this respect, by many class theoreticians as one of the fundamental resources contributing to the social class structure in modern societies (see Bourdieu 1979; Giddens 1975; Parkin 1979; Touraine 1973 and Wright 1985).

It is necessary to examine this process in more detail. At the heart of class dynamics, 'strategies of reproduction' (Bourdieu, Boltanski and Saint-Martin 1978) can be observed, through which the members of different classes and class fractions who have capital strive, though not necessarily consciously, to maintain or improve their position in the social structure by maintaining or strengthening their capital. This is managed in a different way by each class and its fractions, given that there are differences in the family structure, or in other words, the amount and structure of the capital (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) held and to be transferred.

The strategies of reproduction do not only depend on constraints linked to built-in structures, or in other words, on the limiting effects of social class origin and belonging, but also on external structures, which are objective conditions arising from the state of the system of means of reproduction itself, as a result of the power relationships established between classes at any given moment. As can be gathered, neither of these two kinds of conditions are necessarily stable or unalterable, since they are highly unpredictable, depending on the unforeseen effects or consequences of actions provoked by social agents themselves within the mesh of interdependencies which unite them (Elias 1980).

Profound changes in the way family wealth has been transferred have taken place in Western societies in the last few decades.

On the one hand, the extension of schooling has been vitally important for the make-up of societies today, and it is an unquestionable part of socialisation, that is, of social production and reproduction, however much the process of establishing it has varied and however much resistance it has met at the social and local level. In all classes, the more or less lasting passage through the education system is seen today as an inevitable fate for their young members; it does not only take away part of the relative autonomy that the family previously retained in the selection and transfer of knowledge more in harmony with probable future status, but also gives increased status to cultural transmission, while it is a part of the currently dominant means of reproduction.

On the other hand, recent changes brought about in the economic structure have imposed new conditions on the development of the mechanisms of social transmission. There is now a great concentration of companies and businesses, brought about by a change in the nature of property, with the change from individual ownership to share ownership, an increase in the number of salaried directors linked to a significant increase in the size and range of the main companies together with their rationalisation and bureaucratisation, requiring more and more technical abilities whose authority is recognised by the education system. This has turned school qualifications, especially the higher ones, into commodities with an importance which cannot be ignored nowadays. It comes as

no surprise, in the presence of these new constraints, that the bourgeoisie and the petite bourgeoisie fractions better provided with economic capital have recognised the real or symbolic advantages in putting the traditional direct transfer of this capital (whether company, workshop, family business or funded property) to their successors together with the transmission of school qualifications. In these class fractions there is a tendency to convert part of the capital held, and bequeath cultural capital through a different kind of capital, that of schooling, which is more profitable or at least more legitimate, in the current state of social relationships, as a means of access to positions of power.

In their turn, the class fractions whose main or exclusive means of reproduction have been based on the transmission of cultural wealth, essentially by means of educational qualifications which, because they were quite rare, were valued more highly for their effectiveness in real or virtual access to powerful status, have seen this comparative advantage threatened by the recent intensification in the use of the education system on the part of people formerly unconnected with the education market. This unheard-of competition, created in the phenomenon of the 'education explosion' and 'mass education' has caused these fractions to extend the length of studies as a way of preserving previously held advantages, triggering, therefore, an increased struggle for qualifications in the educational market, particularly at the level of higher education, where the qualifications awarded still retain some social and symbolic power.

The analytic proposals of Frank Parkin (1979) seem particularly suitable for grasping and understanding the process of competition between classes in the higher education arena, besides Boudieu's proper theory of fields (1989). Parkin links the Weberian concept of 'social closure', defined as *"a process by which social collectivities seek to maximise advantages through the restriction of access to resources and opportunities to a limited circle of eligible members"* (see Parkin 1979:44), to the theory of classes in a stimulating way.

For him, the process of social closure takes place through collective strategies for action. These can be strategies of exclusion, when a given group intends to guarantee a privileged position at the cost of the marginalisation of another group. It is often this type of strategy which defines the dominant class relative to other classes and which in modern societies is based on two means of exclusion: property and credentials (see Parkin 1979:48-60). In fact, for Parkin, the development of this type of strategy in the specific context of bourgeois society causes constant and inevitable tensions, not just between classes, but also within the bourgeoisie itself. The reason for this is that on the one hand, the latter class is obliged to demand the democratisation of access to higher education in order to legitimise itself. But on the other hand, it is in the interest of that same class to limit access to ensure its monopoly over the professional sector and to reproduce itself.

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Because of this, in modern capitalist societies, these strategies never take on a definite shape; on the contrary, the processes of exclusionary closure are always in a precarious position and subject to updating, given that there is resistance and reaction on the part of those excluded, of those dismissed to being outsiders or 'non-elect'. Precisely because these collective actions develop in the heart of social relationships, they cause responses that may take the shape of strategies of usurpation and which determine, in their turn, changes in the practices of those who do the excluding. Usurpation is therefore the attempt developed by those excluded to *"mobilise power against a dominant group legally defined and supported by the state"* (see Parkin 1979:85). As can be deduced, it tends to arise, above all, in the non-dominant classes.

However, it is not necessary for any of these strategies to belong exclusively to a given class. On the contrary, Parkin argues, these concepts allow us to grasp not only cross-processes between the various classes, but equally internal to each. This is in fact the sense of 'dual closure' which makes it possible to observe strategies of exclusion and usurpation within the same class simultaneously. Though the dominant is, according to Parkin's definition, the *"social group whose share of resources is primarily obtained by means of exclusion"* (see Parkin 1979:93), there is nothing to prevent mechanisms of exclusion and usurpation arising from the heart of groups supplied with resources in different amounts and of different quality, or even among groups who have specific cultural or social distinctions (religious, ethnic, gender, among others).

A demand without formal barriers

It can be confirmed that, in Portugal, the process of the explosion in education at the higher levels of the educational system was triggered off from the 1960s onwards, as can be observed in Graph 1.

The limitations on access to this level of education, which the statistics clearly show, where not due to any kind of institutional mechanisms for restricting the number of students, such as exist today in the form of *numerus clausus*. In fact, at that time, the only formal requirement for getting a place on a course in a university faculty or a further education college was to pass an entrance exam.

However, it would be naive to think that the formal unrestricted opening of university to everyone would be enough for it to be demanded automatically. Until the 1960s, innumerable constraints prevented young people from entering this educational level in larger numbers. Some of these obstacles have in fact been exhaustively documented in studies on the Portuguese university system (see Nunes 1968a,1968b).

GRAPH 1: Students registered in higher education
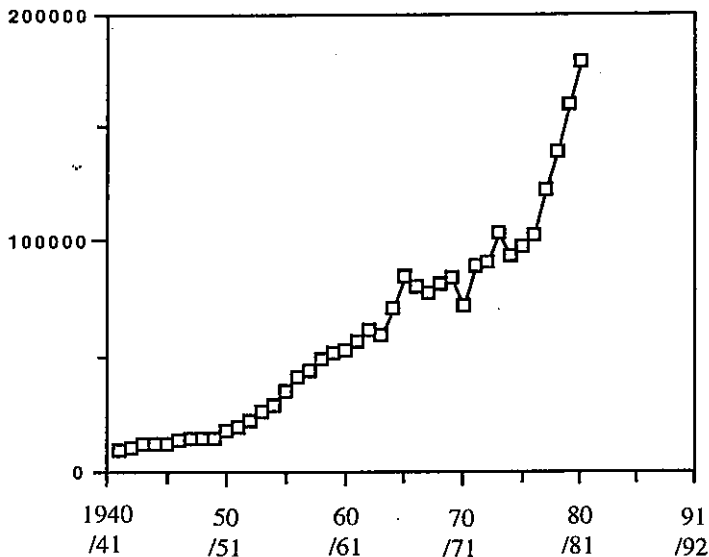
Note: For the academic years of 1982/83 and from 1984/85 to 1987/88 the number of those
   registered is calculated by default, given that there were no data on students on some
   higher education courses in the Education Statistics for these years.

Firstly, the supply of higher education was concentrated in three single
universities, and this, coupled with the almost complete non-existence of
scholarship schemes and other state support, increased the costs of this
educational investment enormously, and thus made it unlikely that the
overwhelming majority of the population resident in areas some way from these
centres would gain access to it.

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Moreover, the curricular content and above all the teaching practices in force in higher education institutions were considered to be extremely traditional, elitist, and used explicit and implicit codes which were difficult to interpret for those who did not have any available educational reference or resource which they could mobilise in the social and regional milieu they were from. The exceptions, that is, the careers which deviated in relation to the modal educational career of the classes who were more deprived of these kinds of resources, were the culmination of patient work. This is because it was carried out under adverse circumstances, by internalising the norms and routines produced in the educational context, and which precisely because it was exceptional, demanded a total conversion to the codes of educational culture and the practices on which they rely, for which the price to pay was the devaluation of the cultural origins.

TABLE 1: Academic qualifications of the parents of students in higher education

Academic Years/ Qualifications	1952/53	1963/64	1991/92
No schooling	–	2.7%	2.5%
Primary school (1st-4th year)	32.3%	32.6%	22.8%
Secondary Education (5th-11th year)	25.7%	27.4%	19.2%
Intermediate course	11.7%	8.7%	8.1%
Higher education	30.3%	27.5%	18.1%
No answer	–	1.2%	27.1%

SOURCE: Machete, Rui (1969) The social origin of Portuguese students. In A.S. Nunes (ed.) The University in Portuguese Life. Lisboa: Office of Social Research (data from 1952/53).

CODES. 1967. Position and Opinion of University Students – Inquiry carried out by the Department of the Catholic University Youth. Lisboa. (data from 1963/64)
M.E., G.E.P. Data as yet unpublished on students registered in higher education in the academic year 1991/92.

NOTE: The data from 1952/53 and 1963/64 refer to the level of qualifications of the father of the students, whereas those from 1991/92 represent the highest academic qualification of the father or mother.

Self-selection, or in other words, self-denial of this educational path, which was in fact already confirmed in lower levels in the education system, was at the time an integral component of the modal career of classes and class fractions with few or no resources in guaranteed cultural capital, as is clear from Table 1. Whether at the beginning of the 1950s, or ten years later, the structure of the parents' cultural capital of university students remained nearly the same, showing a clear predominance of higher qualifications over the then minimum compulsory schooling, the four years of primary education (67.7% and 63.6% in 1952/53 and 1963/64 respectively). On the other hand, the families whose educational qualifications were too basic or non-existent were seriously penalised in the access of their children to this level of education.[1] It is from this that university itself can be held responsible for the strong social selectivity of the university population at the time (see Nunes 1968b).

It only remains necessary to add that Portuguese society still retained wholly rural and traditional characteristics, with the exception of the two main points of urban and tertiary development in the country, Lisbon and Oporto (see Nunes 1964). Here, the relative weight of classes and class fractions linked to the countryside was still important, and social reproduction still depended predominantly on property. These social categories favoured neither an extended investment in education, nor the widespread creation of aspirations which depended on the educational system for their practical realisation. It is no wonder that, because of this, the main users of the university, at least until the middle of the 1960s, were the essentially urban classes and class fractions which possessed reasonable economic or cultural capital, with few or remote connections with direct manual labour, and which were linked to professional areas looking for educationally-recognised qualifications. In this context, a university degree continued to be a commodity which very few of the Portuguese population had access to.

The first phase of mass access to higher education extended throughout the 1960s, and involved the inclusion of a group which had hardly had any representation at this level of education up to then: the female population. In fact, although female participation in higher education at the beginning of the 1960s was around 29.5% of the total enrolled, by the end of the decade, the percentage of female students had already increased to already nearly half (44.4%) of the actual number (see Peixoto 1989:184).

In the space of a decade, the real extension of the female educational 'field of possibilities' was consolidated, therefore spreading the idea of higher education as a possible destiny for girls as well. However, in reality only a specific subgroup was in condition to exploit this opportunity. In fact, it appears that those who first began to gain access to higher educational levels were the daughters of the same

class and class fractions of the male university population, or rather the fractions of the middle and lower middle classes owning more cultural capital, more familiar with knowledge and educational codes, and because of this, able to integrate more easily in the educational system.

An increasing female participation led to an intensification of the demand for higher education throughout the first years of the 1970s. The conditions which some years earlier had favoured the creation of an 'optimistic demand' for education in other countries (see Delcourt 1984:16-19), became present in Portugal (see Grácio 1986:117-138) in the mid-1960s and were particularly noticeable in the middle of the following decade.

The hope placed in the education system as a channel for social mobility by social groups excluded from economically or at least symbolically more valued positions seemed to increase. At the same time, there was a surge of development and modernisation in some sections of the Portuguese economy throughout the 1960s. As a result, the material living conditions of some ranks of the population improved significantly, generating increased resources in these families which could be used for investments in education. In addition, available employment in the secondary and tertiary sectors of work expanded considerably. Abilities authorised by an educational qualification determined the filling of these positions.

However, it is known that the promotion of opportunities for access to the education system does not in itself mean that an identical relationship with school is automatically established. For these reasons, it would be too hasty to argue that the education system was generally or widely valued positively by the whole country and all social groups. We must take into account the strong regional contrasts between impoverished rural areas, well away from the main cultural and university centres, and a coast dominated by two large urban areas where not only the most productive industries and the majority of jobs were to be found, but also the most extensive and diversified supply of culture and education in the country. These contrasts were still clearly present in the heart of Portuguese society at the beginning of the 1970s. Therefore it was more likely that it would be the classes who depended more on credential assets for their reproduction, namely the management and professional upper middle class and the technical lower middle class, who would put higher expectations on the education system, whether for maintaining the social positions they held, or for achieving upward social mobility.

Although the pressure of demand on the educational system was regionally and socially differentiated, it was in fact growing, though not necessarily accompanied by equivalent adjustments on the supply side. In general, higher education continued to present the same structure (geographical, physical, pedagogical) at the beginning of the 1970s that it had in previous decades.

Social aspirations and institutional obstacles

The widespread belief, caused by the institution of democracy in the country on 25th April 1974, that bolder aspirations could be realised, allied with a certain permissiveness then recorded in the assessment of secondary school final year students, suddenly placed an unheard of number of candidates at the doors of the university sector in the mid-1970s.

Indeed, the abrupt change in the balance of power set off by the April revolution enlarged the field of possibilities of groups who up to then were in situations of almost complete social exclusion. Aspirations and claims previously thought inconceivable now became legitimate and possible. New opportunities generated social struggle in a multiplicity of areas, forcing a change in the processes of 'social closure' prevailing until then, abetting the successive practices of 'usurpation' at what appeared sometimes to be a hallucinatory pace.

Obviously, the educational arena did not escape these kinds of struggles. From 1974 to 1976 new universities appeared (Aveiro, in 1974/75; Minho and Universidade Nova de Lisboa, in 1975/76; Azores and Evora, in 1976/77), created under pressure from groups with party and local interests. There were also intense struggles within vocational education for the conquest of social and symbolic privileges attributed to university qualifications, which culminated in the change in status of old vocational schools (Industrial and Commercial Institutes) to Further Education Colleges of Engineering (in 1974) and of Accountancy and Management (in 1976) respectively (see Lourtie 1989:234), now integrated into the recently-named 'Higher Education Polytechnic', set up in 1977 with financial backing from the World Bank (see Stoer 1982, chapter 3). It was, in fact, the integration of these new Institutes into higher education which contributed decisively to stimulate the number of actual students recorded in statistics (see Graph 1 above) and not, as a quick reading of these numbers might lead one to conclude, the simple result of a spectacular 'opening' of the universities.

Nevertheless, in the presence of the unstoppable siege targeted at university higher education, there was a trial run of a first limit on the number of candidates to the faculties of medicine and veterinary medicine in the academic year 1976/77. The 'perverse effects' (see Boudon 1989) then caused a run on courses considered to be alternatives, such as for example biology, chemistry and agronomy (see Pereira 1983:81). This undoubtedly contributed to the decision to apply the numerus clausus to all courses, restricting the entry to this level of education to the capacity for student intake set for each educational institution,[2] an extra year also having been added to secondary education (12th year). In this

context, education policy was clearly operating as a true 'social technology' (see Grácio 1986), with the aim of cooling off the expectations which it had played its part in creating.

The practices that had been established up to then were, at least initially, thrown into confusion by this sudden impediment to free access to a university course and the realisation of associated projects, especially since no credible alternatives were set up. Certainly, processes of closure tended to lead to sharp responses on the part of various social classes. There was deliberate redirecting of choices, totally relegated to luck and chance. Some invested excessively in obtaining educational excellence, while others became completely alienated or even gave up. There was demand for alternative routes for entry into the desired ranks but also impotent passive acceptance of institutional judgements. In this period everything was gambled in the educational arena, the success of the game obviously depending on the different resources and energy which the players had at their disposal for the challenge.

This institutional constraint was imposed just when the pace of growth that had characterised the employment market during the previous decade abruptly slowed down. This was attributable both to internal factors and to the international economic climate at the time. Even if the number of students was contained, it was nevertheless continually increasing and, because of this, contributing to add to the pool of newly qualified graduates coming annually onto the employment market. In this context, the university degree, less affected than other qualifications by market mechanisms, also came to be valued for the extra property which it seemed to offer: a guarantee against unemployment.

This being the case, demand for this qualification intensified, as it was even more tempting and totally indispensable for many of those who depended on this kind of capital for the maintenance or improvement of their position in the social structure. However, this potential increase in the rate of education led, in the context of an economic recession, to the production of a series of qualifications without any corresponding conversion into compatible social positions. Their equivalent value lasted only, in the final instance, for the time in which *"the relationship between the speed of distortion of the 'educational structure' and of the social structure"* (see Grácio 1986:126) was maintained. This is because, as Passeron points out, the *"(...) multiplying of qualifications does not develop at the same speed nor in the same sense as the development in the employment structure"*. From this time onwards, a series of changes was set in motion; as qualifications created in the meantime lost their value, demand for these or for extra qualifications increased as a means of escaping this devaluation. This demand, however, in its turn caused 'inflation' of the very devaluation it was trying to escape (see Passeron 1979:44).

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In the mid-1970s therefore, the growth of the demand for higher education can be considered to have been induced by expectations linked to the new objective and subjective conditions of promotion of access to the educational system generated after 1974. These expectations came to be recognised perfectly by a political power which exceeded itself, at the level of speeches, in incessant appeals to equality of educational opportunities, of which the most axiomatic example actually carried out was, perhaps, the unifying of secondary education.

When these aspirations were suddenly opposed, both by the transformation of the structure of the economic arena, but also by the imposition of a strong obstacle to the entry to higher education, it is easy to understand the 'collective disillusionment' (see Bourdieu 1979:161) which then set in, and to predict the change from an 'optimistic' demand to a widespread 'disenchanted' demand (see Grácio 1986:139).

However, this disenchantment did not succeed in eliminating the general faith placed in the education system in terms of its role in defining the personal destinies of those who attended courses. In fact, the restrictions in access to it seemed to reinforce this faith, to the extent to which they increased investment in study as a guarantee of a qualification, increasinlgy considered as an indispensable passport for realising projects and aspirations.

Thus, from the moment at which the doors of higher education closed conditionally, that is from 1977/78 onwards, it can be noted that the distance between the hopes of getting a place and the opportunities for getting access to it continued increasing, at first erratically, and later, from 1979/80 onwards, in a spectacular way (see Graph 2).

The degree of disenchantment with which students demanded higher education was not confined to their expectation of being purely and simply excluded from it. From the outset, even for those who managed to overcome this disadvantage, nothing guaranteed access to a really desired course. This was a previously unheard-of phenomenon in the context of higher education and must have caused particularly dramatic consequences from the end of the 1970s until the mid-1980s when, finally, the process of setting-up of regional universities and above all the surge of private higher education created more related curricular spaces. As Graph 3 clearly shows, the proportion of candidates placed on courses of their first preference continually decreased throughout these years, which more or less irreversibly compromised the expectations and projects formulated by many of these young people and their respective families.

GRAPH 2: Development of the number of places and candidates for state higher education

Places

Candidates
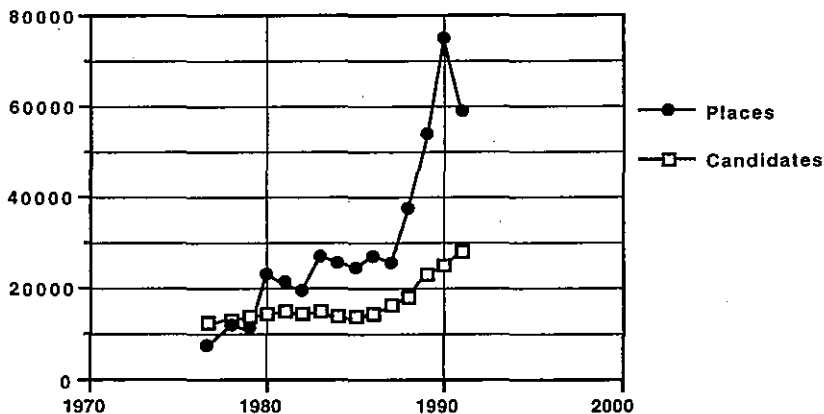
SOURCE: Co-ordinating Office of Entry to Higher Education

But through the implacable judgement of the *numerus clausus* and the expectations of exclusion which it generated, a group of new social practices began to be employed in the university arena. This was an intelligent demonstration of strategies deployed by various social classes as a response to the more intense competition for qualifications and the limitation of access to them. Needless to say the more recent strategies in social practices of students are not identical, given that the 'habitus' which created them is different. In this way, different responses to the same institutional constraints may be generated by the 'categories of perception and of appreciation' (see Bourdieu 1979:158) with which students and their respective families evaluate school, and in particular, university, owing to the specific position which they occupy in the social space and of the kind of relationships traditionally maintained with the educational system.

GRAPH 3: Percentage development of candidates placed in higher education of their first choice
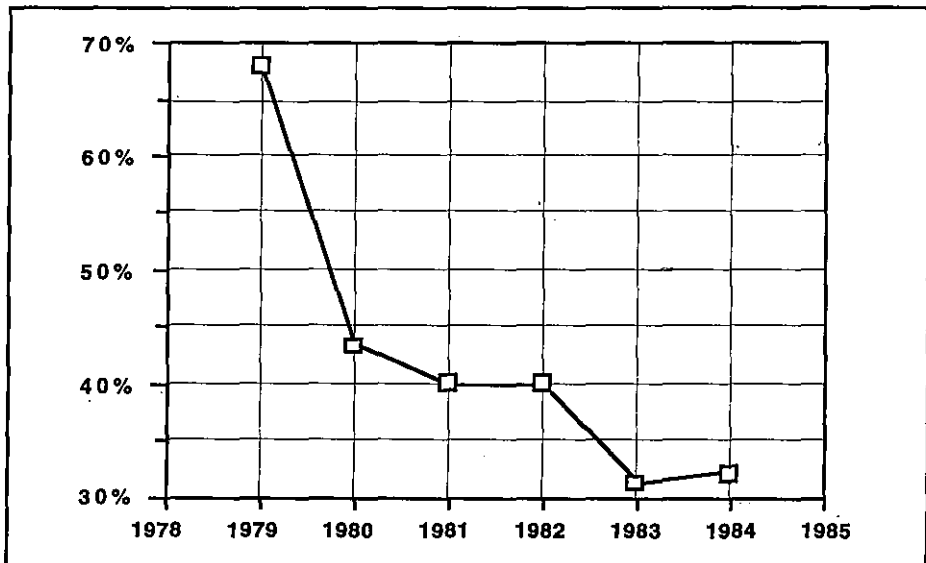
The development of strategies for access

From the very beginning, extending noticeably until the mid-1980s, the strategies for access to higher education developed within an area that was almost exclusively dominated by three classic universities together with the new regional state educational alternatives, namely either universities or polytechnics. In this period, these were the limits of the arena in which the various competitors for the possession of a higher qualification faced each other.[3]

However, this arena was far from being an extended surface to which successive educational proposals of equivalent value could be added, as the main spokespersons of education policy intended to have us believe. On the contrary, it contained subtle internal hierarchies resulting from the processes of establishing and locating distinct spaces.

Although the new universities,[4] with the exception of the Nova de Lisboa, suffer from being insular, inward-looking or peripheral, they can count on university status, which from the outset gives them credibility and symbolic power. However, the schools integrated into polytechnic education generally suffer extra disadvantages, through the fact that these latter offer a short-cycle education which is less varied, based on knowledge of a predominantly practical nature (see Resende and Vieira 1992), and having less relative independence because of this.

However, when they were created, these schools accepted the explicit objective of administering an *"essentially practical higher education, concerned with the training of qualified technical people at an upper intermediate level, with a proper status and a corresponding professional worth"*, as the preamble to the act/decree which established them confirms (see Seruya 1983:84). Attractively packaged in highly complimentary arguments, and promising the final year secondary students the prospects of a *"high probability of acceptance on the employment market, both in the public and private sectors"*, the political speeches which justified their creation and accompanied their expansion were not however sufficient to do away with the *"structural ambiguity"* (see Grácio 1986:151) of this education, given the eminently practical nature of the education which is conferred, the intermediate and not higher status to which its qualifications led and, to this extent, hiding the symbolic devaluation to which it was irremediably linked within the arena.

For this reason, the perspectives offered by polytechnics are far from corresponding to either the social images that the majority of candidates for higher education have of this level of education, or the aspirations produced and consolidated by extended attendance at school. From this it should come as no surprise that this type of higher education was initially given a cool reception by the majority of students, who continued to demonstrate a clear preference for university courses, including courses offered by the new universities, as can be assessed by the comparative table of choices by first option of the various types of educational institution (see Table 2).

TABLE 2: First choice destinations of higher education candidates

Academic years Type of institution	1979/80	1980/81	1981/82	1982/83	1983/84	1984/85
New Universities	10.8%	12.5%	13.5%	17.1%	18.0%	19.6%
Traditional Universities	79.1%	74.7%	73.5%	70.6%	68.6%	67.6%
Non-integrated courses	4.7%	6.6%	6.3%	5.3%	5.8%	4.0%
Non-University Education	5.4%	6.2%	6.7%	7.0%	7.6%	8.8%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In a context like this, in a period in which formal access to higher education was more difficult than ever before, everything points to the belief that those classes and class fractions which were more dependent on educational qualifications – whether for legitimising or for improving their position in the social structure – struggled without respite for the conquest of a place at university. In order to achieve this aim, they set about mobilising all the resources within their reach. There is no reason to doubt that, because new formal requirements for a place on a higher education course increasingly depended on the success obtained at secondary school, these families began to watch over the school career of their children more intensely, demanding extreme diligence in the final years of secondary school so that their children could successfully confront the obstacle of *numerus clausus*. Everything possible was done so as to guarantee access to the desired course; from the transfer to educational institutions known for awarding more 'generous' grades, to school preparation regularly backed-up by private tutoring given by professionals; from daily supervision of their children's studies, to the systematic instilling of an individualistic competitiveness with regards academic work.

But in their turn the list of choices is always limited by the 'field of possibilities' linked to the 'habitus' of class. In fact, no agent chooses courses and educational institutions indiscriminately from the total offered to him/her. Rather, these tend to select those opportunities which show more affinities with the properties and social aspirations of their own group. Of course, this process of 'choice' is frequently expressed as the result of a purely individual preference, and experienced as an 'innate vocation'.

Clearly the system of classification with which each agent proceeds to interpret and assess information on the social world is not static, but undergoes changes, adaptations, biases, in agreement the kind of individual trajectory taken (either in line with the modal class trajectory or on the contrary, deviant to it). This is equally subject to effects of incorporation due to structural changes which occur in the space of each social field in which agents operate. So, in view of the new constraints created in the higher education field, careers and options which were formerly non-existent or illegitimate, in the light of the criteria of classification related to the previous state of this field, came to be considered as possible, viable, or at least tolerable.

Such a process happened in the period under consideration, when the reinforcement of the importance accorded to the possession of a university degree, in the context of a strong restriction of access to higher education, determined the search for alternatives to the access routes that had traditionally been pursued. This was especially true of the better educated sub-groups of the middle classes and dominant classes.

Direct entry into the educational institution placed in first choice is therefore reserved to all those whose long, patient, methodical and strategically-directed school preparation guaranteed them the necessary excellence to attend the desired course. Taking into account the range and the quality of offers made in terms of space, it is supposed that these classes' preferences are for central university institutions namely Lisbon and Oporto.

However, the supply of these much sought-after places was less than the demand, and this entailed the exclusion of some candidates. Not all of these coveted places were taken exclusively by students with these class origins. Representatives of other classes had to be rewarded by the education system when these had followed a particularly brilliant educational career. Such is the logic inherent in the relative independence of the system, and for it to be otherwise would mean a loss of its legitimacy. In this case, the search for new responses to the institutional constraints became pressing, generating truly uncommon solutions.

The immediate abandoning of studies and the intensive investment in social capital as a means of access to active life seems to have been a probable way out

for the more recalcitrant cases. But the game on multiple university and polytechnic chessboards was perhaps the most innovative one played by these classes in order to overcome the prejudices caused by potential educational exclusion. This was based on the development of compensatory strategies which led to the permanent or temporary attendance of 'refuge schools' (see Bourdieu 1989:215) or 'establishments of recourse' (see Ballion 1986:731) which eventually permitted later access to the desired courses. Updated knowledge of the complex mechanisms of equivalence, transfers, closing dates and innumerable bureaucratic-institutional requirements, which some are of course much better able to dominate than others, constituted, in this case, the decisive factor for success in these attempts.

These mechanisms could be exploited by those excluded, by simple transfer from one institution to another in the same residential area. Here they registered for courses perceived to be similar to the ones they had aspired for but had been denied access to. This was the case of the medicine course in Lisbon. Students excluded from that option turned to other 'vocations', including veterinary medicine, chemistry, agronomy (see Pereira 1983:81) as well as biology (Vieira 1986:39), courses which experienced a sudden boom. Interestingly enough, other related options such as nursing were not sought after in a similar manner, being symbolically devalued and more distant from the 'maximum of possible concession' admitted by them.

But these mechanisms may also include resorting to geographical mobility, involving the development of strategies of usurpation of places normally directed to local populations. In this case it is a question of excess numbers not admitted to central universities being placed on similar courses in regional university education institutions. Throughout this whole period, or rather, from the end of the 1970s to the mid-1980s, the students coming from districts in which the two major cities (Lisbon and Oporto) of the country are situated, not only monopolised the majority of the places available in these, but literally invaded the places available in universities and colleges spread throughout other regions. In reality, it is as if both groups shared out well-defined areas of spatial influence (see Leandro 1985) between themselves.

It is very difficult to find a similar commitment to developing alternative solutions for entry to higher education in other classes or class fractions, given the capacity for manipulating information that these strategies involved, the amount of resources required (keeping in mind that, in Portugal, the number of scholarships on offer far from match demand), and the closeness to the system of education they presupposed. To the extent to which available resources were decreasing – particularly in the amount of economic and educational capital possessed – not only were the objective probabilities

of a long education generally more remote, but also, the means of access to this education were more restricted for those whose exceptional scholarly properties in relation to the modal school career led them to aspire to extended study.

Diversification in a restrictive context and the 'sense of place'

The dominant dynamic established in the different regional contexts between the various social classes and higher education in the years which followed the imposition of *numerus clausus* appears to have undergone profound changes from the middle of the 1980s onwards. It is from then on that the increase in regional polytechnic and university state education really took off, and above all, that institutional leaders became more receptive to the idea of expansion of the private higher education sector.

In fact, this type of education had been introduced at the beginning of the 1970s, but was clearly of minimal importance in view of the weight of state education, which incontestably dominated the panorama of higher education up to then. After 25th April 1974 when, given the sudden and drastic imposition of restricted entry, the majority of state higher education institutions experienced a political-pedagogical convulsion, the only private university in the country already in existence at that time gained a sudden importance. This was the Catholic University, set up under special conditions in 1971 (see U.C.P. 1986/ 87:2).

However, the real increase in private higher education came in the 1980s, when the political and ideological obstacles to the development of this type of education were largely eliminated. New universities in Lisbon and Oporto then sprang up, initiatives whose success led many others to gamble on the opening of nuclei and extensions in cities of small and medium size not covered by the state education network.

It can therefore be concluded that since the mid-1980s, the number of students registered in private and co-operative higher education has not stopped growing, which means that the total number of students in higher education has risen dramatically in the last few years (see Graph 4).

This whole set of structural changes in the higher education arena undoubtedly created new data for candidates and their respective families. These were therefore obliged to update their routinised strategies in response to new structures, opportunities and challenges.

Perhaps the most marked characteristic associated with these changes was the exponential growth of options offered at this level of education. The already

notable multiplication of qualifications introduced by the polytechnic now reached new heights with the proliferation of new options and credential titles, even if some of these were merely old courses with more appealing names.

*GRAPH 4: Student numbers registered in various types of higher education*
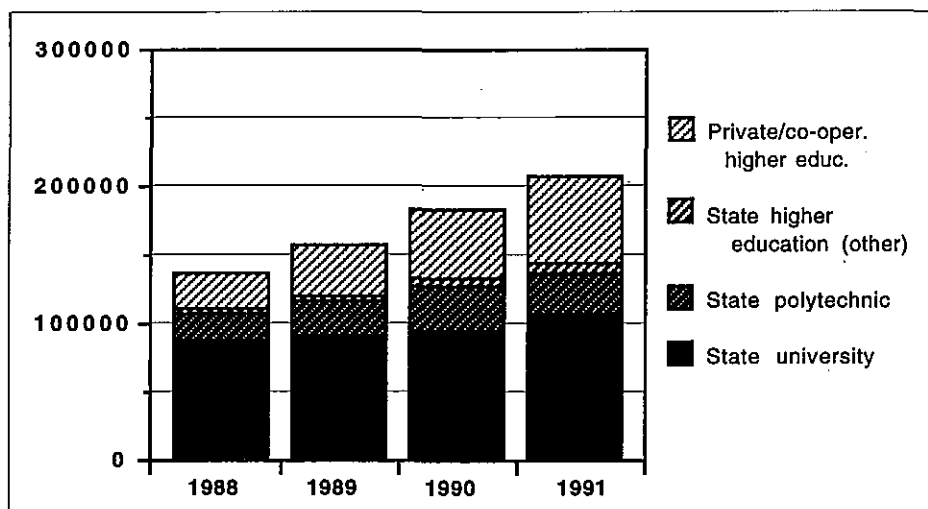
Now, if this enormous growth in alternatives increased the possibility of a greater number of candidates being able to realise their projects for extended study, there is no doubt that it also caused an increase in risks arising from errors in perception, or rather mistakes in the appreciation of school qualifications market. In this new context, the 'sense of place', or rather, the 'practical or educated knowledge about the fluctuations in the school qualifications market' (see Bourdieu 1979:185) has never been as important as it is now, being the indispensable rule for 'success in the education game. This is because with the proliferation of qualifications and graduates, a 'perverse effect' occurs, well

demonstrated by Passeron (1979). This writer argues that when there is increased access to educational qualifications, their quality changes, since their wider availability to previously excluded social classes causes them to maintain only formally the same properties that they had before they were appropriated by these classes. Therefore, since it becomes unreasonable to continue to lengthen courses indefinitely, the 'law of change of field' operates more and more. In other words while previously structuration depended on the number of years spent in study, now it depends on the placing of careers and qualifications in a hierarchical relationship to each other – what Merton would refer to as 'functional substitution'.

GRAPH 5: Students registered in higher education by main branches of teaching
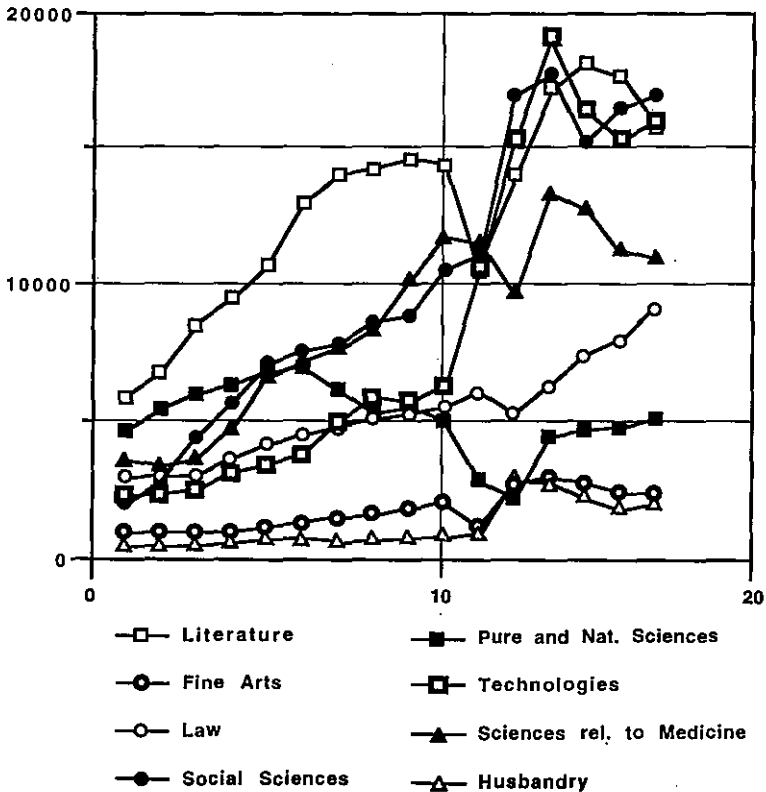
SOURCE: I.N.E., Education Statistics, 1960 to 1980.

The intense demand for higher education initiated and continued throughout the 1960s and the 1970s has increased the number of active students and potential future graduates significantly. As Graph 5 shows, the pace and intensity of the demand in various subjects were not identical throughout this twenty-year period. Some areas registered a growing increase in the number of students even in the 1960s, as was the case of the humanities, medical sciences and social sciences; others experienced a sudden stimulus immediately after the beginning of the 1970s, as happened with technologies, husbandry, and law; still others, like fine arts or pure and natural sciences, experienced a certain stability or even a decrease.

As can be predicted, this increased access to qualifications to a wider base of social categories put the properties that these subjects possessed (and which they guaranteed their possessors in the previous state of affairs) at risk. It is therefore not surprising that this process of devaluation of qualifications linked to their relative inflation has caused great anxiety to institutional spokespersons from the related professional groups enjoying better recognised status and more firmly established privileges.

Interestingly, however, the strategies of exclusionary closure initiated by the 'body' of professional groups who felt more damaged by the unstoppable race for the qualifications that gave others access, only became apparent later, well after the upper limits of the increase in student numbers. This is because the setbacks suffered in their social status – due to the social claim practices initiated by the working class after 25th April (Gonçalves 1990) and the widening of a social and political dialogue which made access to higher education more democratic – had seriously weakened the capacity of the privileged social groups to go on the offensive, and in fact delayed their response.

It was only at the beginning of the 1980s that the Association of Doctors, for instance, wrote a report on the *numerus clausus* for the Faculties of Medicine, denouncing the 'unjustified waste of resources' and the 'anti-economic measures' which would lead the country into a situation of 'unbalanced training and too many doctors'. The argument was that professionals were, after a course of expensive training, being employed in areas incompatible with their true capabilities and skills, and where it was more appropriate to use technical staff with cheaper training (Martins 1980:8). With this dramatic appeal, the Association put all the onus for the consequences of the indiscriminate widening of places in Faculties of Medicine on the state. At the same time, however, it was subtly concealing what it was really worried about, that is, the social and economic devaluation of the status of medical professionals which the proliferation of degrees represented.

But the consequences of increased access on the value of higher qualifications is not limited to quantitative issues, that is, to the fact that they were no longer a

rare good. The great increase in the number of actual students, brought about at the cost of widening the social base for university intake, also meant a change in the social quality of the potential graduates, and to this extent, of the qualifications themselves. Indeed, a recent study based on a national sample of students presently in higher education and in relation to those in that sector in the early 1990s, notes an overall reduction in the educational capital of the origin of students.

Far from introducing a single hierarchy of knowledge (and respective publics) in an exclusive university space, the higher education arena currently seems to manifest various hierarchies which in some cases are superimposed, in others compete side by side, but that altogether undoubtedly create greater structural complexity. The challenge for potential candidates and their respective families to decipher these structures is consequently more difficult.

Some of the splits created after 1974 and which we have already referred to seem to have become even more entrenched over the past few years. One of these divides – perhaps the most critical in the higher education sector – opposes university education to polytechnic education. This confirms, up to a point, the opinions which had already been expressed when this more recent branch of higher education was created. In fact, polytechnic education is still today attended by a population that, on average, has obtained weaker educational results and which generally comes from a background with a lesser amount of economic and cultural capital (Cruz 1992:42).

Another of the sources of hierarchies established within the higher education arena is the 'spatial insertion' or geographical location, whereby institutions based in the traditional centres where higher education is established are opposed to those situated in other regions. Whether one refers to university or polytechnic education, the quantity and nature of courses offered in the three great traditional complexes (Lisbon, Oporto and Coimbra) is in general quite distinct from the other centres. Not only is there a greater number of courses than in other universities and institutes, but they also offer a representative range of all areas of knowledge.

But recently these dichotomies have been increased by an additional intervening element: the development of private higher education. Arising largely after the imposition of mechanisms for restricting entry to state higher education, the private sector intends to capture those who can potentially be excluded from state universities. As can be imagined, the logic which presides over the development of the two types of education is substantially different.

If state education has made a certain effort to democratise opportunities for access, guaranteeing offers in all the relevant areas of knowledge and trying to make them reach the less educationally favoured regions, the private universities

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have an underlying predominantly economic logic ruled by monthly payments beyond the means of many candidates. Supply is concentrated in the main urban centres, where demand is generally guaranteed, and in subjects which not only require few administrative costs but also happen to be attractive at the time (see Resende & Vieira 1993). This is the case of degrees in economy/management, law, social sciences, humanities and mathematics, which make up the central nucleus of supply of the private sector. For this reason, private education is not able to satisfy all those excluded from state universities, which suggests that many of its potential users will be forced to revert to initially intended choices.

The educational and social characterisitics or 'properties' of students attending private educational establishments, and private higher institutions particularly, suggest that these set-ups function as 'refuge schools'.

On the one hand, we have a situation where students in private education systematically possess more inherited cultural capital than students in state education, whether we refer to the university or polytechnic. In the sample referring to 1991/92, the percentage of students whose fathers possessed qualifications equal to or higher than 11 years of schooling is 38.8 per cent in state university against 46.7 percent in private universities. But though they may generally be beneficiaries from the point of view of the educational capital of origin, private higher education students nevertheless have school careers that are more often marked by failure than those of their colleagues in state university (see Table 3).

To sum up, we are therefore in the presence of a population a significant proportion of whom, having failed to attain excellence at school, are not eligible to attend state institutions. So, they turn to the private sector to guarantee a qualification which either legitimises the social position of origin or which represents the route to upward mobility.

TABLE 3: Rate of failure by type of education

UNIVERSITY			NON-UNIVERSITY		
Total	State	Private	Total	State	Private
32%	24.2%	41.3%	53.5%	53.1%	53.7%

SOURCE: Cruz, Manuel et al. (1992) *The PGA and the Students admitted to Higher Education.* Lisbon: Ministry of Education

NOTE: The 'rate of failure' is here understood to mean that there is at least one failure throughout the students' school career.

Through the structural characteristics shown, we can clearly see the movements which have taken place in the higher education arena under the effects of social struggles and the multiple 'senses of place'. There are those who, through their position in the social space, have been able to mobilise the resources necessary to constantly update or even anticipate the changes which take place in the education and economic arenas. They seem to have recognised the profound changes brought about in the space of positions of power – whether in the sense of more intense demand for legitimate qualifications to legitimise access, or whether in the 'diversification of the nuclei of education, corresponding to the diversification of positions' (see Bourdieu, Boltanski & Saint-Martin 1978:123) within this space) for some time – and have changed some of their previous educational and professional orientations in favour of new directions, educational institutions or areas of specialisation, considered to be more profitable in the current state of affairs.

On the one hand, the demand for an education which appears to supply the skills required by large modern companies has indisputably been established. I am here referring to the race for management and economy courses, where intense competition for access exists even thorugh the quality of the innumerable courses on offer differs greatly. While students from families that are better educated with cultural and economic capital occupy the dominant spaces in the higher education sector, namely Lisbon and Oporto, they nevertheless futher discriminate between different educational institutions, which employ two distinct strategies (see Table 4).

Whether in one area or another, the Faculty of Economic and Business Sciences at the Catholic University attracts students from better educational and professional family backgrounds. One has to keep in mind the circumstances which led to the sudden demand for this University after the April revolution, which brought in its wake so many struggles in favour of a democratic-popular definition of higher education, not necessarily the kind of definition the Catholic University adopted. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that this institution was so greatly sought after by those families whose position in the social hierarchy rendered them hostile to the new social accord.

The practices established at the Catholic University contrasted with those existing in state universities. Among these practices was a new form of recruitment based not only on the economic ability to pay higher fees but also on the attendance of a 'zero year' which functioned simultaneously as a space for social and educational selection and for social integration and 'anticipatory socialisation' for a future destiny as one of the 'elect'. Another differentiating practice was a teaching mode favouring emulation and individual competiton than forms of collective work.

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TABLE 4: Higher education institutions attended by students whose parents have superior percentages of qualifications at a higher level, and profesional employment at the level of 'industrial and commercial entrepreneurs' and of 'senior executives and technicians/teachers' – Lisbon and Oporto.

LISBON Institution	%father "entre. w/fur.educ. + exec"	% mother
F. Of Economic & Bus.Sc.(C.U.)	48.34%	50.6%
F.Ed.Col. of Arts	38.98%	40.6%
F.Inst. of Business Communication	38.30%	58.8%
F.Ed. Col of Dental Medicine	36.56%	42.9%
F.Ed. Col. of Dance	36.36%	47.7%
Gregorian Inst. of Lisbon	36.36%	(36.2%)
Fac. of Architecture	34.84%	(31.1%)
F.Inst. of Dental Science	32.34%	(24.5%)
Fac. of Medical Sciences	31.83%	(35.4%)
F.Ed. Col. of Music	30.68%	(25.0%)
Fac. of Medicine	30.39%	(31.0%)

OPORTO Institution	%father "entre. w/fur.educ. + exec"	% mother
F.Ed. Col. of Biotechnology	52.72%	47.2%
F. of Economics & Bus.Sc. (C.U.)	40.03%	47.8%
F.Ed. Col. of Bus. Studies	39.47%	55.2%
F.Ed. Inst. of Tax and Finance	34.92%	47.6%
Fac. of Architecture	33.00%	(37.7%)
Fac. of Law (C.U.)	32.63%	41.4%
F.Ed. Col. of Arts and Design	31.40%	43.0%

SOURCE: Ministry of Education, G.E.P., Data as yet unpublished for students registered in higher education in the academic year 1991/92.

NOTE: Data refer to almost all the student universe in higher education and was obtained through responses to a statistical bulletin which students have to fill in when they register. In spite of the high non-response rates for questions dealing with the social-professional category of the father (36.69%) and the academic qualifications of the father or the mother (28.74%), the wide coverage of higher education institutions are included here. The only exceptions are the Higher Institutes of Engineering of Lisbon and Oporto, the Faculty of Law of the Catholic University, in Lisbon and the Faculty of Sciences and Technology of the New University of Lisbon.

Finally, a third distinguishing practice was the valuing of those who were opposed to the radical ideas embraced by student and staff activists. Through these ways, this univerity continues to consolidate its position of academic rigour, and to distance itself from other institutions in the private university sector. But, above all, it produces graduates whose qualities and characteristics are all the more positively appreciated by potential employers, specifically the more dynamic (national or multinational) private companies (see Boltanski 1980: 76-82). So much so, that the above-mentioned skills and technical abilities certified by the educational qualification can be consistently aligned with the group of social properties that the graduates themselves owe to their social origin (physical attitude, 'presence', manners, 'general culture', good taste shown by innumerable signs) and which are, as is well-known, a significant element in the non-explicit criteria for business recruitment (see Boltanski 1980; Passeron 1970; Granfield & Koenig 1992).

Given the truly high concentration of students with an enviable family background – at least in terms of the amount of cultural and economic capital – in this faculty, we can confidently confirm that it is currently, in the higher education arena, a privileged space of production and reproduction of outstanding graduates. This does not reside so much in the simple transmission of technical skills indispensable to professional performance, but above all in the *"opportunity to cultivate relationships and to develop a collective élite identity"* (Granfield & Koenig 1992: 504), a process which is aided through intense daily socialisation between peers, promoting and consolidating common styles and behaviour. This socialisation is particularly valuable for the Economics and Business students who are only educationally – not socially – 'excellent', and less familiar with the subtle social codes which will determine the way they will be evaluated by large companies once they present themselves on the job market. They can thus benefit by learning how to decipher what had hitherto been for them inaccessible codes. The production of collective identity thus generated contributes, in its turn, to the confirmation of the image which economic agents and families already have of it.

However, the criteria for educational selection which, among others, determine access to the Business faculty, end up excluding many of the candidates who have identical family backgrounds, but whose weaker school results relegate them to other spaces. In this case, and taking into account the average school qualities currently shown by students in non-university private higher education (in which the three other educational institutions in the financial and business arena attended by students with high cultural and/or economic family capital are included), it is sensible to suppose that these choices may be refuge-alternatives for 'inheritors'. These are, above all, those originating from class fractions who hold more economic than cultural resources, with weak school results, and who

bet on courses having either more ambiguous names, or appealing to more specialised and innovative areas, and which are consequently less well-known in the field. These students use this ambiguity to consolidate some power within the arena, guaranteeing at the same time, with the qualification obtained, the necessary legitimacy for the access to positions which social destinity seems to reserve for them. In this case, and given the extremely strong concentration of children of businessmen, senior executives and technicians, we can reasonably assume that the symbolic profitability of the qualification obtained seems to depend more strongly on the strategies of exclusionary closure which these candidates (even though not in a deliberate way) develop in view of other candidates' intentions to acquire the same qualifications.

On the other hand, the symbolic power linked to education paths giving more direct access to liberal professions has been maintained. In medicine, for instance, students with better educational and economic resources have shifted their investment towards new specialisations in the health area, away from the traditional state faculties of medicine which had become open to democratic access. A case in point is dental medicine which is very attractive to the élite professional groups since there are few Universities that offer it, and therefore its rarity increases its market and social value when compared to other specialisations in the public health system. As Portwood and Fielding argue (1981:763-767), the acquisition and maintenance of privileges which certain professions or professional segments generally retain, relative to others, is a complex process involving multiple factors. One of these is precisely the set of social properties marking the clients who turn to these professions.

As regards law, it continues to exert some symbolic power between families endowed with a greater amount of cultural and economic capital.

We can safely confirm that, currently, these areas and these educational institutions are, as a group within the higher education arena, what Bourdieu, refers to as 'schools of power' (1989:1888). This is an apt definition of the situation, given the social qualities of the students who attend courses in these establishments, and the potential positions the latter give access to.

But it is not only in this type of school that students who come from families with better backgrounds are distributed. Other types of education, guaranteed by other educational institutions, also seem to be legitimate 'fields of possibilities' for students with an appreciable amount of educational and/or economic family capital at their disposal. This is the case with a group in education which, as Bourdieu would have pointed out, is homologous with the arena of intellectual and artistic power. I am referring to the fields of architecture and arts which, in Lisbon and Oporto, function in a way that is similar to the 'schools of power' described earlier.

Given the more 'dilettante' characteristics of the education given, and the greater uncertainty associated with the qualifications which these institutions award (with the exception, perhaps, of architecture), we can state that they are above all the result of choices made by females, whose future hope for a position within the dominant class space is not so much determined by professional success as that of males (see Vieira 1993).

However, as we have seen, the reinforcement of social struggles around the competition for credentials leads to a noticeably more intense use of the education system by a population with fewer resources, and above all, with a modest or no family educational tradition. These hold class positions close to the lower middle class, and even to the working class itself, and are specifically local. In this case, the social 'habitus' associated with the social position of the group signals a particular range of options. Students from lower middle and working class fractions, and therefore with limited education capital, choose from these options as they attempt to gain access to higher education. *Habitus* combines with 'effects of incorporation', due to interaction in social contexts outside the family, identification with reference groups, and the fairly lasting relationship with partners of social interaction (see Costa, Machado & Almeida 1990:197). It is this set of influences which crystallises orientations towards educational as well as social and career paths and trajectories.

These families are at a greater distance in relation to the education system and have much less recent information in relation to the educational qualifications market. Therefore, given these factors, it is easy to predict that 'errors' of perception are more likely to occur, leading many of these students to devalued choices. The long-term effects of these choices will be even more irreversible when there is less social capital which they can make available to compensate for these errors. Given the accelerated inflation of diplomas, the 'sense of place' is therefore decisive in the determination of social destinies. Bourdieu's concept of *'habitus hysteresis'* is useful here to explain how lack of discriminatory ability *"leads to the application to the new state of the qualificaitons market the categories of perception and of appreciation corresponding to a previous state of objective opportunities for assessment"* (Bourdieu 1979:158). In other words, these students develop hopes which, while justified in terms of educational discourse, could be dashed in the final stages of their social trajectories, particularly at the moment of entry into the market of labour.

These 'errors' are not limited to the choice of qualifications, many of which, in reality, are potentially devalued. They are, in this case, the new range of courses offered currently in polytechnic higher education, particularly the non-arts areas (teacher training and education sciences, nursing, social work, accountancy and administration), where one finds a concentration of students coming from families

who have traditionally been kept away from the education system. Indeed, a high percentage of them have parents who had completed only four years of schooling in all (see Ministry of Education 1992).

Indeed, 'errors' also have an effect on university education itself, where until recently, the fact that its qualifications were relatively rare guaranteed their holders a high profitability, which if not economic, was at least symbolic. In this case, 'disfocussing' of appreciation or 'taste' in educational choices, leads many of these students not only to the remote or recently devalued areas in the field of power – as is the case with humanities, for instance – but also to the educational institutions which once had retained monopoly on certain courses, and enjoyed prestige, but which today are rapidly passed over by candidates more familiar with the subtleties of education mechanisms.

The relative ignorance of these subtle differences – at least related to entry to the higher education sector – could raise hopes which cannot really be fulfilled. In this case, students are condemned to the condition of double *'déclassés'* in the sense that *"having abandoned their milieu of origin, they will not manage, or only rarely, to reach the social milieu which they aspire to"* (see Desaunay 1974:205). In this case, some practices of resistance or challenge led by some of these students still on their way to further education could bring some 'status inconsistency' linked to feelings of potential 'relative deprivation' (see Maravall 1972) in view of the expectations which they originally brought with them.

Conclusion

Portuguese higher education has become an important arena of class struggle and social diferentiation, especially in the past two decades.

Until the mid-sixties, access to it was practically reserved to a restricted number of students whose cultural and economic capital of origin provided them with the adequate resources to successfully face a long school career and to cope with the rather traditional pedagogical practices and cultural codes which dominated Portuguese universities at that time. Credentials being one of the two means of exclusion in modern societies, the relative rarity of university degrees offered their holders obvious social advantages and privileges.

In the beginning of seventies, some important changes in the mechanisms of social transmission and social reproduction, together with the expansion of tertiary activities and the growth of an urban petite bourgeoisie, produced an increased demand for education, as a means of obtaining the amount of cultural capital necessary to improve or maintaining social positions.

The institution of democracy in Portugal, in 1974, fanned social aspirations and further intensified the demand for higher educational credentials. The imposition of *numerus clausus,* as an inevitable consequence, transformed higher education into an arena of class competition and a scene of processes of social closure. Threatened by the usurpation of university places by successful students coming from social classes or fractions previously excluded from a long schooling career, the upper and middle classes had to establish new strategies of social closure, such as precocious preparation to ensure university entrance, redirecting of choices, or even geographical mobility to guarantee a place, albeit in a local university.

The expansion of public polytechnic education and the emerging of private universities, had, by the mid-80s, created a new context for class competition within higher education. The diversification of alternatives not only increased the possibility of a larger number of candidates attending this educational level, but at the same time heightened the risks arising from errors in perception of this widened school qualifications market. Therefore, considering the subtle hierarchies established in the higher education field, the 'sense of place' has become, perhaps, the most important mark of social differentiation within this field.

Notes

[1] In Portugal, these families were far from being rare. In fact, the census of 1960 showed that those from the working population having secondary or higher level degrees represented only 5% of this group.

[2] It seems to have been above all the unsustainable overfilling of educational institutions, whether in terms of spaces or in terms of excess of student numbers relative to teaching staff available, or rather, internal causes in the university arena itself which determined the introduction of this unpopular measure. It seems that at the time, the balance of power between the various social groups seriously penalised institutional whims of 'closure' entertained by some sectors of professional groups whose interests were now at stake. The internal struggles then provoked in the heart of representative bodies of more powerful groups did not seem to leave either the space or conditions for the development of mechanisms and processes of exclusion. It was necessary to wait some more years to see Associations, like those of Doctors and Engineers, proposing new exclusionary practices such as a reinforcement of the numerus clausus for Portuguese faculties of medicine (see Martins 1980) or the position adopted in 1988 by the Association of Engineers regarding the integration of Further Institutes of Engineering into Polytechnic Higher Education.

3 Certain sub-groups of the dominant class, however, have a wider range of possibilities for access to higher education at their disposal, by virtue of the fact that they hold sufficient economic and information resources for them to also be able to include attending a foreign university in their range of choices.
4 They are those of Aveiro, the Minho, the Azores, the Inland Beira, the Trás-os-Montes and Upper Douro and the Algarve, successively established between 1974/75, the date of the creation of the University of Aveiro, and 1983/84, the year in which the first courses of the University of the Algarve opened.

Maria Manuel Vieira da Fonseca *is a senior lecturer in sociology of education at the Department of Education, University of Lisbon, Portugal. She is currently a member of the Board of the Portuguese Sociological Association. Her research interests include social class, education and the family. Address for correspondence: Departamento de Educação, Faculdade de Ciências, Edif.C1, 2ºPiso, R. Ernesto de Vasconcelos, 1700 Lisboa, Portugal. Tel. (351-1)7500049; Fax. (351-1)7573624.*

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