

Different Patterns of between School Segregation in Public Schools in Brazil: The Case of Rio de Janeiro

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Abstract

The paper uses school-level figures for all Municipal Public Schools in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to analyse patterns of between school segregation in three variables: 1) pupils living in poverty; 2) pupils' parent education; 3) pupils' ethnic background. Recent research in public schools of Rio de Janeiro highlighted strong parental struggles for the most prestigious schools and also different strategies and criteria by members of the educational bureaucracy in order to select pupils. This particular scenario, that combines purported freedom of choice for parents with school's control over their intake, has received the name of "Hidden-Quasi-Markets". The Database used was provided by the Municipal Education Department and presents figures for pupils between 6 to 14 years old – the first nine years of compulsory schooling in Brazil – for all Municipal Public Schools (1100 schools), from 2004 to 2010. Segregation was assessed utilizing two different indices: the Segregation Index and Dissimilarity Index. Understanding the levels of segregation and how it is happening is relevant for future public policies aiming at more equitable educational systems. Clustering favela children or those from poorer, less-educated or Black families, in a sub-set of schools has possible implications for their future educational outcomes, such as attainment, post compulsory participation and the academic performance of the most disadvantaged groups. It is also an affront. The results using the Segregation Index and Dissimilarity Index were consistent, showing the same patterns in all three variables. However, each trend of segregation, using the different indicators such as poverty, show distinctive trajectories over time, which might suggest three different processes of segregation happening at the same period of time. Comparing different regions of the city – total of ten educational authorities – the levels of segregation can vary up to 50%, depending on the variable observed. The levels of segregation in all three variables were higher when comparing the segregation measured in different "school shifts" (morning, afternoon and night) with the figures of the "school building" – disregarding the shifts. These last findings suggest active participation of the educational bureaucracy in the stratification of the educational system, with an even higher increase for the variable that measures pupils living in poverty. The paper describes the background, methods, results and implications of this new and complex analysis.

Key Words: School Segregation; Life Chance; Poverty; Parents' Education; Ethnicity.