

Internationalization strategies for education: a survey of the sociological literature*

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Abstract

This work gives an overview of the contributions made by national and international studies on the theme of internationalization strategies for education. In general, these studies focus on recent modalities of investment made by socially advantaged families, and on the international dimension of the cultural capital. Acquiring these resources – the sum of linguistic, cultural and social skills, apart from the mobility itself – is interpreted by these groups as the agent of the constitution of aptitudes that would result in a resourceful performance by their children in international environments. The analysis of the collection of results gives important clues insofar as it makes visible common strategies characteristic of the current times, but also signal to the need for better understanding of the peculiarities that characterize distinct actions and values attributed to what is international by segments of the population in several countries. In this sense the text highlights the sociological relevance of the object, particularly in the Brazilian case. What happens is that the recent resorting to what is international as an educative strategy, not only on the part of the elites, but also by socially emerging groups, has contributed to an increased complexity, or even a worsening, of the scenario of inequalities in school opportunities that has traditionally been a hallmark of the struggle for higher positions in the social hierarchy of the country. Thus, the renewed interest by things international seems to constitute in recent times a further factor to deepen and consolidate the already existing boundaries separating those who can benefit from this kind of capital throughout their schooling from those who are limited to the national resources.

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The literature in the field of Sociology has reaffirmed throughout the years the unequivocal correspondence between the profitability of educational initiatives and the different positions of the subjects and social groups that make use of them. Said in a different way, the higher the possession of material and symbolic resources, the greater the chances of 'getting it right' in the investments that concern school education, insofar as these resources enable the subjects to better envisage their possibilities, to make adequate choices, to invest in specific targets and derive from them the best possible result. Pierre Bourdieu, in the study that culminated with the publication of his *Distinction* in the late 1970s, highlighted the "relational" connection between the social positions of the subjects and their strategies of action. Behind the statistical correlations between social origin and school capital, there are hidden variations between groups that keep with culture distinct relationships, according to the conditions in which they acquired their cultural heritage and to the possibilities they had to convert it into other types of capital as the rules of the social game elected novel resources as more profitable assets (Bourdieu; Boltansky; Saint Martin, 1973). As recalled by Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot (1996) in the conclusions of a conference that gathered researchers around the issue of Elite formation and the transnational culture, "[...] those more secure of their [social] positions are also those that dominate the new dimensions of the rules of the game".

Recent sociological studies about educational strategies of socially privileged families have recorded a particular component of these updates and conversions of capital in present times: the investment in international symbolic resources. This means that an international dimension of the cultural capital seems to emerge forcefully in the last decades as a target for investment within those social layers when they consider the schooling present and professional future of their children. This is

nothing new. In the case of Brazil, for example, it is well known that a common practice among the economic elites since the colonial period (Brito, 1996) was schooling abroad, which usually happened at the university level. However, the specificities of this new attention to the international are reviewed nowadays by the different modalities of strategies that aim at the accumulation of international symbolic goods: they occur much more frequently, extend to new social groups and, besides that, take place at all levels of schooling.

This article intends to draw a picture of the contributions that national and international researches have made to the theme of internationalization educational strategies, so as to underline their emergence and relevance as an object of study today.

The contribution of the international research

The recent investments of social groups in international symbolic capital have been noticed not just by sociologists of education, but emerge also as a relevant information in other studies focused on the analysis and understanding of the lifestyles of the more affluent strata of society. So, in the case of the research made abroad, the approach to this theme arises with its focus on several perspectives:

- Through the analysis of the international investments operated by educational institutions corresponding to a specific demand for this capital.
- Through the investigation of the characteristics and consequences of a socialization/schooling of an international nature for the subjects – the families and students that make use of this resource – and about the ways of interpreting the meaning and potential of this capital in the current social struggles.
- From the point of view of the private practices of international investment,

components of the lifestyle of more favored groups that, beyond the focus on schooling, resort to actions which aim at increasing the international symbolic capital of their children.

The international and the school institutions

The research by Jay (2002) investigated the famous Swiss private schools, among which are also the international ones that prepare students to enter the great American and European universities. Families of a highly privileged economic situation seek these establishments to turn their economic capital into cultural and symbolic capital through the choice of a school socialization that prepares their children for the highest positions in the liberal careers, in diplomacy, in industry and commerce, and for a life in the high society. The international background of the students is a sign of excellence for the schools, maintained of course the social homogeneity/selectivity. The incentive of cosmopolitan dispositions is an aspect detected by the author, both in the strategies of the establishments – such as promoting cultural trips abroad – and in those adopted by the organizations to which these institutions belong, which take care of facilitating the professional insertion of the students in universities of dominant countries or in international careers.

Features similar to those found by Jay were also discussed by Panayatopoulos (1997), who studied the upper segment of the secondary schooling in Athens through the monograph of a private school that recruits its clientele among the local bourgeoisie. The author's intention was of understanding possible changes – due to the current context of globalization of the economy and of internationalization of the labor market – both in the social use that some upper class families make of this route, and in the strategies of the school itself. In this last aspect, he highlights recent actions taken by the establishment with

the intention of preparing the students for their careers in a transnational market: more hours of teaching of foreign languages, particularly English, as well as conferences about the economic and political systems of European countries, visits to European and American institutions, and student exchange. These are practices that reinforce the importance attributed to the international element in the schooling of students at that institution, in which “[...] the political cultural of the students is defined by its international relations qualities” (p. 228). In this sense they are strategies that aspire to constitute a social capital and a “cosmopolitan capital”, powerful factors of distinction in today's society, according to the author. He calls international, and not transnational, the culture thus produced and the formation defined by the establishment studied, insofar as they are also based on maintaining part of the national cultural references.

The international as a target for family investment

The term transnational is employed by researchers Broady, Börjesson and Palme (2002) in a study focusing on the use of the international in education – by people and institutions – and its relation with the conservation or transformation of the structure of the social space. The importance attributed to the transnational strategies (understood as periods of study and training abroad, foreign language skills etc) emerged from the data as one of the more visible factors of change in the educational field of that country, considering the large number of Swedish students enrolled in universities around the world¹. Previously a prerogative of the dominant layers of society, internationalization strategies have also

1. This flow, according to the authors, would also be an evidence for the “subordinate” condition of Swedish education in relation to foreign teaching systems, a reflection of the peripheral position of the country within the world scenario of power relations between nations.

disseminated across the less favored strata of the Swedish population which, since 1989, began to rely on financial aid from the state. The increased choice altered the profile of the students that make use of the international: from a group with good school credentials in the past, it has been more recently constituted by students with a deficient school record who, not being accepted into the Swedish higher education system, resort to less stringent international universities. Thus, the internationalization strategies becomes in these cases a means to achieve the university level of formation for those who, without school credentials adequate to move into the Swedish Higher Education, rely henceforth on less prestigious foreign universities where they are accepted. In the case of education institutions, and among the more valued and prestigious schools, the investments in the international aim at inserting their students in the transnational educational and professional markets. Less prestigious schools, on the other hand, make use of this resource with a view to its return in terms of the struggle for a position in the national sphere, in other words, in the competition within the Swedish educational and professional market.

This same expectation of profit from the international symbolic capital in the social struggles internal to the national space can be identified in the studies by Wagner (1997; 1998; 2002). Among these works there is a study with users of a Paris group of international schools dedicated to the children of upper echelon workers and foreign executives. The investigation supposed the possibility of the social construction of categories of thought, cultural norms, and new transnational competences – because free from national conditioning – resulting from a more intensive contact between people of various nationalities. The results do not reveal, however, signs of intellectual unification. The educative practices in schools and families turned out to be strongly based on the national references of

each specific culture. A particular kind of school socialization is, on the other hand, observed in the case of children that were exposed early to modes of distance sociability, with the linguistic diversity, with the unspoken codes, and the “unsaid” of each culture. For Wagner (2002) this “international culture”, and not transnational, is not defined as a world culture that would replace national cultures, but as the accumulation of several linguistic and national cultural competences, an accumulation that puts the international student in advantage in relation to those that remain confined to the national. The constitution of a network of sociability in different countries on the part of these students, as well as the lifestyle they acquire as a result of their contact with different cultures, are seen by the author as founding features of this international culture.

The peculiar to the international culture lies on the accumulation of social resources in a whole series of domains: the knowledge of foreign languages, cultures and ways of life, the geographic dispersion of the family and of relations, the possibility of developing a career in various countries, and lastly a kind of alchemy of linguistic, cultural, social, professional, and symbolic capitals. (Wagner, 1998, p. 17)

The recognition and valuation of these capitals nowadays is a theme explored by Weenink (2005) in a study that analyzes the relationship between the Dutch upper middle class and the secondary education in that country. The study tries to understand the relationship between differentiated social trajectories within the middle layers and the options of families for each one of the three modalities of formation offered at the preparatory level for Dutch universities, among these the international one. Two different types of cosmopolitanism characterize the relationship of the families studied with the international: the dedicated and the instrumental. The former are parents that have already traveled widely and lived abroad, who are fluent in at least on

foreign languages, who see themselves as citizens of the world, for whom country borders pose no impediment, and who try to encourage and cultivate the same dispositions in their children. The instrumental cosmopolitans, alternatively, are more present among those who opted for the international formation, who had cosmopolitan work experiences, and see in the international assets instruments for their children future careers. They are parents that, generally speaking, restrict cosmopolitanism to knowing English. The option for the international route, according to the study, attracts families that identify in the cosmopolitan assets a way to increase the chances of inter-generational upwards mobility. Not really settled among the upper middle class, they show anxiety and urgency of investment in international resources, which they see as markers of their social position. The data still reveal that the “mobile” families or those “with international mobility” are not the only ones interested in an international education: parents from “non-internationalized” middle classes seek in it a more exclusive form of secondary education, other than that traditionally offered by the public education system. Thus, the investment in the international school, according to the author, aims at a “modern prestige” instead of the “old prestige” that traditional schooling has always offered.

Practices of internationalization

Many of the characteristics discussed by Weenink (2005) about the cosmopolitanism of the families also represent features that constitute a cosmopolitan habitus detected by Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot (1996; 2002) in studies that deal with forms of socialization of the younger generations of French families from the old bourgeoisie and from the wealthy nobility. The authors define these families as cosmopolitan. This cosmopolitanism is visible, for instance, in their wedding ties, which occur for the most part with foreign families, and in their

preoccupation with learning and using other languages, practiced at home by the parents or in travels, linguistic sojourns or schooling periods abroad, for which the families mobilize their networks of cosmopolitan acquaintances. It is the acquisition of these abilities that affords since an early age, as in the case of the Wagner (2002) research, the familiarity with geographic and cultural references that go beyond the national. Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot (2002) note the control that these groups exert upon the schools they attend, establishments in which the mark of cosmopolitanism is irrefutable: these are institutions that, in general, recruit students from different nationalities, value and conduct various trips of cultural discovery, emphasized the learning of foreign languages through practices of total immersion, journeys dedicated to one or other language, and the exchange and stay in similar institutions abroad. In short, the authors highlight the valuable capital of international relationships, “a unique social capital made of knowledge, complicity and friendship throughout the world that links together former colleagues [...] across borders, beliefs and languages” (p. 25). a capital that is constituted during the youth years, and that can be mobilized at any moment in their lives.

The signs of cosmopolitanism observed in those studies are equally confirmed by Vieira (1997), who analyzed the socialization processes of the younger generations of dominant classes in Lisbon from 1970 to 1990. Among her discoveries, the author calls attention to the educational strategies of the families, which reveal the trend to the internationalization of the learning, interpreted by her as one of the most important changes in the schooling of these youngsters nowadays. The trend can be seen, for instance, in the common resource to study trips abroad, but also in local practices of relationships with the international, which are expressed in the option some families make for enrolling their children in international institutes of education located in their own country. In a more recent

study (Vieira, 2007) the same author analyzes the growing interest of Portuguese youngsters from the country's cultural elite in the Erasmus mobility program sponsored by the European Union as a way to foster the exchange of European university students. The school massification and the loss of the distinguishing value of diplomas have, according to her, accentuated the current demand for new attributes in formation. Geographic mobility is then interpreted as a desired competence of practice or know-how, seen as an individual and personal achievement within a context in which cosmopolitanism imposes itself as a cultural knowledge or need in opposition to immobility and national confinement.

This same notion of cosmopolitanism as a cultural need also emerged as a constituting element of the lifestyles of the families analyzed by Bonnet (2001), who studied the strategies of social reproduction of the elites in the French city of Lyon, taking as a point of departure the unconfirmed assumption that these groups would be constituting transnational elites, and no longer local elites. The study detects clear signs of special attention being paid to internationalization, both in the parents' discourse – as shown by their insistence on “opening” – and in their daily practices of investing in the learning of languages, and in their children interacting with other cultures through study trips or stays abroad. Mobility appears exalted as a modern virtue among families which, according to the author, distinguish themselves from the others for their capacity to benefit from the current process of intensification of international exchange, a difference that relates to the logic of increasing social inequality.

The contribution of national research

The foreign studies analyzed so far have grounded the Brazilian works that deal directly or indirectly with the issue of educational strategies of internationalization. They are recent productions, but that have nevertheless started

to contribute to expose the phenomenon at a national scale:

- Through the analysis of specific strategies of internationalization and of the people carrying them out;
- From the discussion about the impact and consequences of experiences of internationalization by Brazilian families abroad;
- Or through the investigation of its school dimension, that is, when the resource to the international occurs through schooling at an international establishment located in the country.

Practices of internationalization

The studies by Prado (2002) and Ramos (2007) analyze specific strategies of internationalization, seeking to characterize who are the subjects of these actions, as well as their expectations regarding their investment in the international. In the first case, Prado (2002) investigated the practice of high school exchange adopted by some families in the city of Belo Horizonte. They are groups that, according to the results of the study, are positioned in the middle layers of the population. To the author, the wealthier social strata (the economic elites) make use of other forms of access to studies abroad. As a common denominator in the parents' discourse, results show the specific reoccupation with the personal realization of their children, without jeopardizing the expectations regarding the “opening” to the world, to different cultures, apart from a greater sensibility to cultural assets that the practice of exchange would supposedly bring about. The resource to the international appears in these cases associated to the idea of a conversion of identities and adhesion to the international spirit. The evaluations of the parents about the experiences of internationalization of their children revealed expectations that group around two distinct perspectives. The first of them –

utilitarian – is typical of families that bet on increasing the school and future professional chances which, according to them the practice of exchange could promote. The identitarian perspective, on the other hand, characterizes discourses in which the very same investment is tied to an idea of a wider formation of values, of personality and of personal autonomy. Based on the supposed benefit brought by the learning of a foreign language, it emerges linked to the social profit that this acquisition can bring in terms of a cultural *savoir faire*, an aspect that is proven by the regularity revealed by an inspection of the countries of destination of exchange students – in their vast majority of English language.

The study by Ramos (2007), a Master dissertation still in progress, investigates the socioeconomic and academic profile, as well as the motivations, of young university students who applied for the “student exchange program” of UFMG (that allows undergraduate students to take an academic semester in a university abroad). The author draws attention to the steep increase in the demand for this service, which was created in 1996 by means of bilateral agreements with foreign universities. The study analyzes applicants to the 2007 edition of the program, and takes the hypothesis that, from socioeconomic and cultural standpoints, exchange students are better positioned than the average UFMG student. One of the evidences for that difference would lie in the conditions required by the exchange program: the better part of the expenses – air travel, accommodation, food, health insurance etc – are to be covered by the student’s family. However, the author also points to the possession of cultural capital, in particular a capital of information about the university world and its workings, as characteristic of the applicants’ profile. From the strictly academic point of view, the criteria of the program already represent requirements of good performance in the course attended and of proficiency in the language of the foreign university.

The international in the trajectories

The studies by Brito (2004) and Nogueira (1998; 2004; 2006), by their turn, are focused on understanding the impact and importance of an experience of internationalization in the trajectory of Brazilian families. In the former study, Brito (2004) tries to locate and analyze the place of international experiences in the trajectories of Brazilian students who received scholarships to study in France. The results point to two typical trajectories: that of “the heir” and that of “social ascent by the school route”. The former is broadly typical of the children of liberal or intellectual professionals: segments well endowed of cultural capital, which are acquainted from an early age with the studies, with culture, with reading habits, thereby acquiring precocious academic dispositions. Going abroad fits, in the trajectory of these students, into a continuum. Among the heirs, the author identified still some cases of dispositions that would characterize an international habitus. These are students whose heirloom has in the international culture and international social capital a constituent part of its history. In contrast, the trajectory of “social ascent by the school route” is typical of students whose families have little economic and social resources that they can mobilize in favor of their children. The itineraries in these cases are less dependent on the family capital – especially on cultural capital, which is here usually scarce – and more strongly marked by the movement of ascent through the school. The contact with the international occurs at a later stage in their trajectories, which can be characterized as “local” or “migrant”. In the former case the studies are carried out entirely in one city, usually their home town, which the author associates to a group of assimilated dispositions that would configure a local school habitus. The migrant habitus, on the other hand, characterizes students exposed to a constant conflict with the cultural differences experienced in a series of movements inside the country of origin. The dispositions acquired here

favor flexibility and adaptation to different contexts, setting them apart from the students with exclusively local trajectories.

The impact of experiences abroad is equally a theme investigated in the studies of Nogueira (1998; 2004; 2006). These works focus on distinct social groups – families belonging to the intellectual middle class (Nogueira, 1998; 2006) and families of businesspeople (Nogueira, 2004) – and made it possible to contrast different internationalization strategies. In the former case, the author discusses the role and the consequences of internationalization experiences of the children brought about by temporary stays of the family abroad due to professional needs of the parents. The internationalization strategies of these segments of the middle class revealed a shared search for an enhanced cultural and school formation in the cases of families that consider as positive effects of internationalization: acquiring fluency in other languages; constituting a system of dispositions favorable to the contact with other cultures; autonomy; the instrumental profitability of the international capital in the school and professional markets. The aspects of the experience deemed as negative, such as difficulties of adaptation and discrimination, delays in schooling after returning to Brazil etc, are downplayed by parents for whom internationalization is a “priceless experience” which is “worth the effort”. In the businesspeople families, whose economic situation allows frequent travels abroad, the results revealed a clear preference for short-term studies. These are parents who, without failing to recognize and value the symbolic profit potentially afforded by a study experience abroad, are also concerned about probable risks of a long stay abroad for the professional career of their children, which is usually already planned. Thus, if the internationalization experience is seen in the case of intellectual parents solely in its positive aspect – as enriching cultural capital and promoting the widening of horizons and opportunities – the families of businesspeople can see in this same experience potential risks to their children’s

trajectory, and therefore seek to control tightly the conditions and consequences of its development.

The internationalization through schooling

Lastly, the use of the international was also analyzed in its strictly school dimension in the researches by Cantuária (2005) and Aguiar (2007). Cantuária (2005) investigated the genesis of the space of international education in the city of São Paulo during the first decades of the 20th century. The study involved ten international schools in the city fulfilling at least one of following requisites: functioning regularly in Brazil as an international institution, or being recognized by the education system of the country of origin. The results made it possible to unveil the reasons and interests underlying the creation of these schools – at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th – associated to the trajectory of differentiation and insertion of groups of immigrants in Brazil and in their home countries. Although the study, in contrast to those mentioned in this article, does not discuss current strategies of internationalization of studies, it contributes nevertheless to reinforce the idea that the international circulation of people and ideas is not a recent phenomenon; and also that the creation of these institutions does not have its origins in the current intensification of international exchange. These schools guaranteed to the privileged segments of foreign groups the accumulation of the symbolic capital essential to their insertion in Brazilian society and their social distinction. Among its Brazilian users, the author observes families strategies of accumulation of international capital through schooling which, according to her, explains the creation in 1923 of the Lyceum Pasteur, responsible since its very beginning for the education of several generations of traditional families in Brazil. These are results that clarify and accentuate the strong relation between the

expectations of social insertion and reproduction of some groups at a given historic moment and their option for international schooling. The study revealed also the strong link between the image of each school and the attributes of its country of origin which, according to Cantuária, explains both the value of institutions linked to highly industrialized nations, whose image is associated to ideas of contemporaneity and efficiency, and the progressive loss of prestige, in the school arena, of establishments with a more classical and humanist tradition.

In a recently finished doctorate research, Aguiar (2007) analyzed the current interest of socially favored Brazilian families in two international schools of fundamental and secondary education located in the city of Belo Horizonte: the American school and the Italian school. The history of these establishments by itself is a record of the increasing demand from national groups for schooling in international fashion. Created decades ago – in the 1950s in the case of the American school and in the 1970s in the case of the Italian school – and originally dedicated exclusively to foreign students, these institutions began to accept Brazilian students in the 1990s – following both the national mandatory curriculum and the foreign one – in response to the growing demand from Brazilian families for this kind of schooling. This process resulted in a reversal of their public, previously constituted by foreign students, and now having a solid majority (more than 90%) of Brazilians². The author identified investments in different international resources – offered by establishments with very distinct pedagogical proposals – made by social groups quite varied as to the nature of the capital that is the basis of their wealth. For example, parents strongly favored from an economic point of view, whose children travelled frequently abroad, in other words, families assured of other possible paths (besides the schooling) of internationalization aim above all at the practical learning and command of the

English language that the American school offers. The English language is seen in these cases as a capital essential to the proficiency required to circulate within international spheres, many times already incorporated into the social trajectory of the parents. On the other hand, families whose symbolic wealth relies on the cultural capital in its school version reveal a clear wish for distinction in the school and cultural formation of their children. These are parents that seek in an Italian institution a European humanist education – which they see as forsaken in the current curriculum of national schools – as a strategy to acquire, through the school path, the international dimension they miss in the cultural resources accumulated so far. In these cases, of groups generally belonging to the middle and upper segments of the middle classes, the author observed some urgency in an internationalization of the children that could not be achieved in the parents' trajectory. Taken as a whole, these are families that see as a reward for their investments in international schooling the acquisition of capitals and dispositions which, in consonance with the historical evolution of their economic, cultural, and social wealth, they deem essential to the future success of their children.

Conclusion

Taken as a whole, the results of the national and foreign researches reveal common features that help to understand the current family strategies of internationalization of schooling both in Brazil and abroad. A wider group, besides the elites, recognizes in the international resources an advantage essential to their performance and reproduction. This dimension of the cultural capital – the accumulation of linguistic, cultural, and social competences, in addition to the mobility itself – would be potentially conducive, in the view

². The same trend was observed by Cantuária (2005) in the study with international schools in the city of São Paulo.

of some families, of dispositions necessary to the proficiency of action of people in international spheres and different cultures. From the point of view of the education institutions, schools answer to this type of renewed interest for the international through various initiatives of promotion of internationalization of their students.

It is, however, necessary to place the actions of the subjects and institutions within the disputes pertaining to the social spheres in which they act, and to the position they occupy in the hierarchy of these universes. In this sense, seen in its wider dimension, an analyses of the current consequences and characteristics of the globalization and mundialization – as applied to the technical and economic realities, or to the cultural one, respectively (Ortiz, 2007) – cannot neglect the reappraisal of the modes of domination inherent to them. In other words, it is important to underline that these phenomena are inscribed in a world of relations of unequal symbolic forces between nations (Wagner, 2003), an aspect that attributes different values to the international resources offered by each country. Those understood as more profitable are associated to dominant nations, a consequence of the fact that these countries, as Wagner (1998) recalls, end up imposing their national attributes (for example, their culture) to the others. Consequently, international resources acquired in the contact or living experience in countries that are not well positioned in the world scene tend to be less valued because they are devoid of symbolic power and prestige.

Thus, from the point of view of the social struggles under way in Brazil, the contact with foreigners or with the culture of developed nations confers a sign of excellence, insofar as it affords social and symbolic games, expressed in dispositions that distinguish their bearers from those that remained confined to the national. These aspects explain to some extent a common feature observed as typical of the recent strategies of investment in international resources by part of the Brazilian families: a kind of reverence before the culture produced

by the so-called developed countries. A reverence that finds expression, on one side, in terms of ideas – in the almost absolute belief that parents and children have in the positive effects of internationalization. And on the other, in terms of actions, motivated by the anxiety of parents to invest in the most profitable international resources available, capable of developing in their children dispositions that they themselves lack: a kind of proficiency in dealing with the international, which they recognize and covet, but which only the earliness of acquisition (Bourdieu, 1979; Wagner, 2003) could afford.

So, in the case of Brazil, it is as if one of the effects of the recent strengthening of international exchange had been of awakening and unleashing in other social groups the feeling of deprivation of resources that previously they did not regard as capital. According to Bourdieu (1992), the value of a given type of capital depends on the existence of a game, of a dispute in which it counts as a “trump card”, endowing its bearer with a kind of power or influence. The same resource can be interpreted differently by various groups or subjects, that may recognize it or not at different moments of their trajectories as a target to be followed, a strong trump that will make the difference in the social disputes that will be faced. Hence the sudden recognition and the good will it attracts (Nogueira; Aguiar, 2008) and the anxious investment in the updating, now urgent, of the composition of one’s own cultural assets, assessed and perceived nowadays as if they lacked a hallmark of essential value, the international capital.

It is in this sense that the deeper analysis of the theme at hand acquires sociological relevance, insofar as the recent use of international resources as an educational strategy also by emerging groups, besides the elites, seems to arise as a factor that worsens and turns even more complex the situation of inequality of school opportunities that have traditionally influenced the social dispute for

better positions of the subjects within the national scenery. Thus, if in the case of developed nations the renewed interest in the international may have as a likely development the reshaping and reforming of the principles of the social hierarchy in the more favored strata (Wagner, 2003), in the case of Brazil this

phenomenon acts above all in a different direction: deepening and consolidating still further the already existing boundaries between those that can benefit from the profitability of this kind of capital throughout their schooling and those that find themselves limited to the national resources.

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