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# **General, technical and vocational education: Worker's formal and non-formal education in Argentina and Canada: on the importance of comparing workers' trajectories in different societies**

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**Abstract:** This paper arise two general objectives: to summarize the basic empirical and theoretical ideas of and to present the first comparative results about the application ArCaWall in the Gran Buenos Aires. The first objective is summarized in this paper and the second one is grounded on the adaptation for the urban social and productive Argentinean reality of the original CSEW-OISE WALL questionnaire. This paper has a theoretical framework of the researches and the limitations and possibilities of a comparative approach; the empirical evidence is systematized for the labour market situation and formal and non-formal education of the workers.

## **About The Theoretical Framework And The Comparative Approach**

The researches of the Education, Economy, and Labour Program (PEET-IICE/UBA) interdisciplinarily fall within the field of the political economy of education, with a meaningful contribution of the economy and the sociology of work. The theory that ground the researches is the radical economy, because when we go deeper into the dualist labour market theories, they conduced to the development of the hypothesis about the labour market segmentation and the interpretation of the access to the labour market as predetermined by the differential possibilities ascribed to the segment or origin social class (Carnoy, 1977; Piore, 1983).

From the labour economy we get the comprehension of the economic and productive heterogeneity and the sub-markets functioning both for the activities or economic branches, and for the interpretation of the consequences of the different technological processes in the labour organization and in the dynamics of the firm market in big sized companies (Piore and Sabel, 1990; Katz, 1978 and 1981; Monza, 2002 and 2007).

The impact of the world economic crisis and the emergence of the new paradigm implied the set of another game rules, regulation mechanisms and arise of other institutions in the social and political innovation process with serious surroundings of conflicts among social groups. The consequences for the Third World countries were very serious because of such structural changes in critical development contexts and high social demands for the basic needs satisfaction.

The critic theories of the educative policy complement our comprehension of the education and vocational training systems in different stages of the economic and political development. In this paper it is of our interest the nineties neoliberal policies impact in Argentina, that have caused a decisive fragmentation and diversification of the education systems (and of the education systems in the world) as a result of the decentralization and delegation of the direct actions to local spheres and actors.

This conceptual framework has allowed us to go forward in the interpretation of the complex social and productive reality of Argentina, as a developing country, for the characterization (or the intent to do this with the available weak information sources) of the

access and continuation logics of the different social groups in the education system and the transition to the labour market.

The hypothesis and/or interpretative assumptions that guide our researches are the recognition of:

- a high inequality in the distribution of education, considered as the educative social debt, in quantitative and qualitative that are expressed in the double education and labour exclusion of the adolescent, young and adult population;
- the functioning of a differentiated education and vocational training market that we have characterized as short term illusions that makes deeper the inequality of the appropriation of knowledge;
- the continuation of the hypothesis of the accumulative advance (who has more, gets more) that benefits the access, continuation and achievement of those with more education.

The CSEW-OISE/UT team, in this paper I make a special mention of David Livingstone, as education sociologists, acknowledge the structural changes in the production relations and their impact on work processes, using the concepts of the flexible accumulation theory (Harvey, 1989) and recognizes that internal organizational structures are becoming increasingly destabilized and that the structures of work and employment relations are being refashioned in more complex and contradictory ways.

David Livingstone summarizes the basic questions of prior studies and, especially WALL survey point out that provides profiles of the current work and learning activities of Canadian adults. The survey probed workers' perceptions of recent changes in key dimensions of paid and unpaid work and reports of their learning practices. "The WALL survey addresses three basic questions:

- (1) What are the current forms, contents and outcomes of the array of learning activities of Canadian adults?
- (2) How have changes in the nature of paid and/or unpaid work and other general social conditions in the past five years and longer been associated with adults learning practices?
- (3) What differences are there in these learning and work relations between social groups and especially between socially disadvantaged groups and others?" (Livingstone and Scholtz, 2006).<sup>1</sup>

### **Labour Market And Education And Vocational Training: Relative Disadvantaged Groups**

It seems to be pointless and subject to objections to do a comparison of two countries, one that is among the most developed countries in the world<sup>2</sup>, with another that managed to have a place between the developed countries during the sixties because of the educative indicators, but after consecutive crises and authoritarian governments it is between the countries in economic recovery and still has serious living standard issues and regressive income distribution indicators. Some historic studies exposed that in the XIX century the starting points and conditions of Argentina and Canada were similar: the extent of the territory, the agricultural and stockbreeding production for export and the European immigrant population. However, the politic, cultural and social realities shape the history of each country and the position of them in the world capitalism development.

A review of the current the particularities and similarities can be follow below

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<sup>1</sup> Livingstone, D.W. and A. Scholtz (2006) *Work and Lifelong Learning in Canada: Basic Findings of the 2004 WALL Survey*. CSEW-OISE, Universidad de Toronto, Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Canada is part of the Group of seven countries the most industrialized of the world alongside Germany, United States, France, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom.

<b>Argentina</b>	<b>Canada</b>
<b>Population and age structure</b>	
36,260,130 habitants. 28.3% of them are 0-14 years; 61.8% are between 15 and 64 years (active age) and 9.9% are more than 65 years.	32 million habitants according to the 2006 Census. The Canadian population is quickly aging.
<b>Productive structure (according to produced added value by activity branch, 2009)</b>	
Heavier weigh of Finance, entrepreneurial and real estate (19.8%), Industry (17.1%), Electricity, gas and water (15.2%).	Heavier weight on two productive branches: Finance, entrepreneurial and real estate (26.1%) and Teaching, health and social services (14.5%). They are followed by Industry (21.6%) and Trade (12.6%).
<b>Labour market</b>	
The occupational structure in 2006 is centered in Trade (20.2%), Industry (14.1%), Teaching, health and social services (13.9%) and other branches (13.4%). This is explained by the presence of the domestic service.	The occupational structure in 2006 is specialized in Trade (17.5%) and Teaching, health and social services (17.8%), Finance, entrepreneurial and real estate (17%) and Industry (13.3%).

Currently, the outstanding points are

<b>Argentina</b>	<b>Canada</b>
Structural poverty that is impossible to overcome despite the economic growth. The official (object able INDEC) percentage of households under the poverty line changes from 42.7% in 2003 to 9% in 2009.	Poverty registers a continuing fall since 1999 to 2008 from 13% to 9.4% of the total of the population (Statistics Canada, CANSIM).
High levels of income inequality. Income distribution during the third three-month period of 2010 shows that the 20% poorer of the population gets the 4% of the total incomes, while the 20% richer gets more than 49% of the total, this mean 10 time more than the poorer quintile (INDEC).	Income distribution in 2008 shows that 20% of people of higher income get in average 5.4 times more income that the 20% poorer. This rate hasn't change since the year 2000 (Statistics Canada, CANSIM).
Low level of education	High level of education

The education level variations according to gender allow sustaining that in both countries the female workers have higher education levels than males, and this situation continues to benefit them through time, this is not the case of employment, as they have higher levels of unemployment.

In Argentina, in relation with the beneficiaries and the excluded from education it is important to stress that:

- the persistence of beneficiary population of higher education level and of groups at educative risk;

- the paradoxical situation of women with higher relative education, whom have grater difficulties for accessing the labour market;
- youth is a generation group with the benefits of higher education levels but suffers double exclusion from education and labour when belongs to low income households (Riquelme, 2000).

During the nineties the world of vocational training suffered a strong expansion and differentiation through the multiplication of institutions and courses. These responded to the orientations of the state policies towards the production of “active quasi- markets of education and training”, which supported the quality elevation through the inter-institutional competition, the attention of precise supply with precise demands and a great dispersion of entrepreneurship.

The characteristics of the courses and their implementation set the hypothesis about the existence of a “short term illusions market” aiming at attracting employed and unemployed workers who are tricked by temping offers ensuring employment through the attendance to practical and intensive courses with no basic formation (Riquelme, Herger and Magariños; 1999). They are considered as short termed illusions because they promised training and experience adequate to the supposed market demands and a quickly work insertion afterwards. (Riquelme, Herger and Magariños; 1999).

Alongside with the growth of training supply, the idea of “employability” starts rooting in common sense. This idea assumes that the difficulties in getting a job are actors’ responsibility and, fundamentally, are caused by low and insufficient qualification level. This idea underestimates the fact that there are scarce job positions in the labour market. Therefore, people are driven into the work formation and training “market” with the illusion of getting the necessary credentials in order to compete under equal conditions for the scarce job positions available.

### **Population assistance: challenges and critical needs**

<b>Argentina</b>	<b>Canada</b>
<b>Quantitative</b>	
<b>Adolescent and young population excluded</b>	
31.5% of adolescents of 15 to 19 years didn’t attend to the education system and the great majority didn’t finish secondary education (2001 Census).	18.7% of adolescents of 15 to 19 years didn’t attend to the education system, in 2007 9.8% was in that situation (OCDE, 2009).
<b>Adult population</b>	
In 1999, 58.1% of urban population of 25 to 64 years didn’t finish secondary education. In 2009, the urban population with low education drops to 46.2% (EPH, May 1999 and 1° three month period of 2009)	In 1997 22% of adults of 25 to 64 years didn’t complete secondary education, ten years later this population reaches 13% (OCDE, 2009). Slightly disadvantage of males.
<b>Quality assestments (PISA 2006)</b>	
Science: 391 Reading comprehension: 374 Mathematics: 381	Science: 534 Reading comprehension: 527 Mathematics: 527
<b>Labour market</b>	

<p>Youth, women, immigrants, low education workers (incomplete secondary education). Almost 10 million people (70% of economically active population) suffer from employment problems in urban areas: unemployment, indigent work, precarious employment and underemployment.</p>	<p>The precarious forms of employment correspond with, or cut across, social divisions based on gender, race/ethnicity and immigration status: white women, immigrants, migrants and people of colour engaged disproportionately in insecure forms of employment. (Fuller and Vosko, 2007: 33)</p>
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### **The WALL Survey Application In Argentina Challenge**

Starting from the academic invitation made by David Livingstone to me and for this reason to PEET in order to adapt WALL survey in Argentina, the discussion about the reach of the theoretical framework for both teams with different disciplinary fields but took place, doubtless, with similar approaches and recognition of the social, educational and labour different situations in Argentina and Canada.

Within the framework of PICT00267<sup>3</sup> project and CLACA project, it has been planned the adaptation for Argentina of the WALL survey questionnaire which was developed by CSEW research team for the Canadian adult population. The differences of the social structure, the labour market dynamics and the differences of the education and training between Argentina and Canada are taken into consideration.

The work team<sup>4</sup> for the adaptation of the survey studied both WALL I and WALL III questionnaires, this last one is foreseen for 2010. As it is the first application of the survey in Argentina, it has been decided to use WALL I questionnaire as it includes the higher amount of variables for the study.

In Argentina we have two previous national survey annexes modules backgrounds in the Social Development and Living Conditions Survey of 1997 and 2001 (EDS) and the Education module of the Permanent Household Survey of May 1998 (EPH).

It has been achieved the adaptation of the survey “Work and Lifelong Learning” (WALL) survey, designed at the CSEW<sup>5</sup>, and ArCaWall is the name for its application in Argentina. The main contents are the characterization of formal, non-formal education and the informal learning practices of adult population (above 18 years old), the connections with work and other spheres of the social life.

In the WALL questionnaire adaptation for the application in Argentina, were included the following issues:

- Comparability with the Education module of the May 1998 Permanent Household Survey. Topics and questions were added in order to allow the actualization of the results of that module

<sup>3</sup> Project “The demand for general, technical and vocational education in post-crisis Argentina: a review of the supply and demand concepts and an evaluation of workers’ educational needs” PICT 2007-00267 Subsidy of the National Science and Technical Fund (FONCyT)- National Agency of Scientific and Technological Promotion (ANPCyT). Director: Dra. Graciela C. Riquelme. Institutional headquarter: Education, Economy and Work Programme (PEET) at the Educational Sciences Research Institute (IICE) of the School of Philosophy and Literature (FFyL) of University of Buenos Aires (UBA).

<sup>4</sup> Team directed by Graciela C. Riquelme and integrated by Natalia Herger and Martín Spinosa. The team had the collaboration of Ariel Langer and Jorgelina Sasserá.

<sup>5</sup> Centre for the Study of Education and Work (CSEW), Ontario Institute for Studies of Education (OISE), University of Toronto.

“Return to study” in the section Adult Education of WALL; the assistance to formal education outside of the levels of the education system during different periods of time (current, one year, five years) and the main characteristics of the courses (name/subject of the course, type of establishment where it is or was taken, if it is free of charges, educational level needed, length, modality, reasons for taking the course); alternation between education and work in all educational levels and for all the population; the study and work practices developed as part of the study programmes;

- section Learning skills and Access to information and communication technology are summarized in one section for researching about skills (reading, writing, explanation, argumentation) and the use of computers in different situations (work, transactions, helping children to do homework, job search);

- employment and unemployment status, in this section were added topics about multiple jobholding, precarious employment, participation in employment or social programmes and the deepening in unemployment situations;

- informal learning related to get recourses for the household, this means, learning done by the low socio-economic level groups whom income are not enough for sustaining the minimum requirements of the household and need to access to resources using different ways (institutional social aid, social programmes that distribute goods or subsidies);

- informal learning related to the job search, in order to research about the leaning done by unemployed people during the last year and the learning specifically related to the job search;

- prior learning and participation recognition, which in Argentina has a recent development and short extension. About this topic, it is researched about the adult population willingness to participate in prior learning recognition and certification programmes. Moreover were also added questions about the existence of these programmes or policies in Argentina and the participation in them.

### **Final Remarks**

The singularity of the ArCaWall results will allow the discussion or affirmation for Argentina of:

- the verification of the hypothesis of accumulative advance;

- the reaffirmation for the need for expansion policies of adolescents, youth and adults formal education for obtaining a higher educative level and besides to guarantee an adequate appropriation of knowledge (considered as quality);

- the verification of the dispersion, fragmentation and the specific character of the learning provided by the market of short term illusions that would be significant only with the base of a complete primary and secondary education;

- the recognition of the learning in multiple spheres of the social, cultural and politic life;

- the importance of the study of the use of time of low education workers.

Doubtless, this will allow the definition of political lines to orientate:

- adolescents, youth and adults education to favor the articulation between disperse supplies of the market of short term illusions;

- the impact of return to study (1998 and 2011);

- the definition of knowledge recognition programmes, comparing the Canadian experience with

the incipient local processes;  
- the limits of supply and demand adjust policies by the size of the demand.

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