

Academic Elites and Economic Elites: professionals with a postgraduate degree in Brazil

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ABSTRACT – Academic Elites and Economic Elites: professionals with a postgraduate degree in Brazil. This article analyses some characteristics of the postgraduate Brazilian population in the period of 2009-2015 presented by the statistical data of the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística - IBGE, Centro de Gestão e Estudos Estratégicos - CGEE, Relação Anual de Informações Sociais - RAIS and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - OECD. The analysis of the data shows that the postgraduate professionals continue to be a minority in Brazil, belonging to academic elite and, in most cases, to economic elite.

Keywords: Academic elites. Economic elites. Professionals. Postgraduate.

RESUMEN – Élités Académicas y Élités Económicas: profesionales con postgrado en Brasil. Este artículo analiza algunas características de la población brasileña posgraduada en el periodo de 2009-2015 presentados por los datos estadísticos del Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), Centro de Gestão e Estudos Estratégicos (CGEE), Relação Anual de Informações Sociais (RAIS) y de la Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económico (OCDE). El análisis de los datos muestra que las personas con postgrado siguen siendo una minoría en Brasil, perteneciendo a una élite académica y, en la mayoría de los casos, a una élite económica. **Palabras clave: Élités Académicas. Élités Económicas. Profesionales. Postgraduado.**

Introduction

The study of elites is relatively recent, for Latin America, and specifically for Brazil¹, with a start in the 1990's (Hofmeister, 2007; Espinoza, 2015). From the examination of related literature, it can be observed that there are not many studies or analysis on the social groups that have ascended the education process, especially those who have obtained the most prominent professional credentials². Most of the social scientists, since the second half of the century, have dedicated their investigations towards the schooling of poor or low-income segments, under the (exclusive) influence of Marxist fundamentals on social class.

In the face of this evidence, it can be observed that there are two arguments when studying highly educated minorities which can be justified by the attempts on understanding “for who are reserved the highest social positions” and to “comprehend the processes of social construction of education inequality³” (Almeida; Nogueira, 2002, p. 7-8).

In that line, the goal is to establish dialogue between different sociologies – of the elites, of work and of professions – utilizing as a starting point the empiric analysis of the social segment that holds a postgraduate degree – master and doctorate – in Brazil. The proposed analysis is mostly based on statistical data presented by the Center for Management and Strategical Studies (Centro de Gestão e Estudos Estratégicos – CGEE) related to the 2009-2015 period and considering essential variables such as field of knowledge of the postgraduate degree, gender, occupational group and average monthly income. Statistical data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística – IBGE), Social Information Annual Report (Relação Anual de Informações Sociais – RAIS) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Organização para Cooperação e Desenvolvimento Econômico – OCDE) were also useful for the understanding of the link between this segment and the Brazilian population.

Elite and inequality in Brazil

The term elite comes from the Latin word *eligere* and from the French word *elire* which mean to *choose* or *elect* and was used to name products of *exceptional quality* during the 17th century, it went on to refer to individuals who possessed some type of *superior ability* and to social groups (Bottomore, 1965). In the beginning of the 20th century the concept was used by Vilfredo Pareto⁴ to highlight different groups inside a certain society: the rulers (the elite) and the ruled (the people)⁵. According to Jiménez and Solimano (2012, p. 9), “there are at least two trains of thought on the elites which originate, respectively, from the sociologic school and the economic school”, respectively represented by Charles Wright Mills and by Vilfredo Pareto.

On the meanings around this concept we must ask ourselves: Is it possible to consider the elite in its singular sense? What can be under-

stood as power and how is it exerted over the people? Are the people a homogeneous, disorganized and uncritical group? These were and still are some of the controversies throughout the 20th century which have provoked some (re)elaborations of the concept of elite and its link to the others.

According to Boudon and Bourricaud (1993, p. 197), Pareto is one of the few in the Sociology of the elites who argued the use of his concept in the singular sense. Therefore, there is a tendency to consider that one should talk about *elites*, that is to say in the plural, since a heterogeneity of recognition and belonging to one and / or another is identified. That is, an individual is able to differentiate between being recognized or feeling that they belong to one or more elites, under one or more criteria – social or economic origin, occupation or position, merit and/or education, for example (Hofmeister, 2007; Espinoza, 2015).

The elites were initially used in opposition to the social classes, but throughout the 20th century that defense was practically dissipated since one social class has “many groups which may be engaged in several levels of cooperation, competition or conflict between them” (Bottomore, 1965, p. 16). At this point it is necessary to highlight the words of Bottomore (1965, p. 15) when he states that this study may be *helpful* because it allows us to understand “the size of the elite, their figures, the relationships between them and with the holders of political power” and, also, it allows the identification of “the form of recruitment of its members and the consequential degree of social mobility”.

In Latin America there is still the tendency to recognize pertaintment to a certain elite “in many cases because of origin and economic power, which has to do above all with the unequal distribution of income. Latin America, as international statistics confirm year after year, is the most ‘unequal’ region of the planet” (Hofmeister, 2007, p. 127).

As for Brazil, there is a tendency to consider that Brazilian elites are heterogeneous (Riedner; Pereira, 2012). Some investigators have dedicated themselves to understand how the elites view and what they think of the origin of inequality⁶ and poverty in Brazil and to which degree they are responsible for inequality reduction. There is a tendency to a consensus that the Brazilian elites see poverty as something that should be solved, that they are not in any way related to the problema and they think such situations should be solved by the State (Reis, 2000; Gimenes; Ripari; Ribeiro, 2013; Silva; Lopez, 2015).

Another aspect that must be observed refers to the capacity of power or authority of an elite and if it exists and if it exists as appropriation and submission by the people. It is true that Pareto and Mosca considered the people as a *disorganized* and *uncritical* group, a condition that can be reexamined when it is considered that the struggles established between different individuals is the engine of history. Thus, although an elite is seen as opposition to the people, it must be theoretically and empirically treated in its dialectic perspective.

Furthermore, to talk about elites it to talk not only about its relation to the people but also to consider that they exist as a consequence of

social inequality (Bottomore, 1965; Silva; Lopez, 2015, p. 160). The ones who belong to the elites are those who were *chosen* and who stand out because they are different if compared to the others. However, different in what sense? To answer such question one must consider diversity of criteria of recognition and pertainment to the elites, as has been mentioned earlier, and such criteria derive from inequality in social groups.

Equally important is the (re)production of inequality which occurs from the inheritance of cultural capital from parents and above all income inequality, because this is a family inheritance of position and opportunities (Sánchez Herrera, 2004). It must be considered that individuals who belong to higher economic social segments tend to obtain more success in their schooling process. The analytical current that takes this social segment calls it *wealthy class*, *high class* or being considered as pertaining to a determined kind of elite (Brandão; Lellis, 2003; Nogueira, 2005). As for income inequality and wealth inequality they tend to (re)produce an economic elite or other kinds of elite. In short, economic inequality generates different individual trajectories, different means of access to opportunities and social mobility.

Amongst different kinds of inequality, one of the most important is *income inequality*, which allows it to compare social conditions of the population. According to Pikety (2014, p. 233-234) income inequality can be decomposed in three terms: income inequality of work, inequality of capital ownership and income inequality which results from both of the ones already mentioned. Income inequality of the Brazilian population can be visualized in Chart 1.

Chart 1 – Percentage of individuals aged 10 or more in Brazil, according to average monthly income, by monthly income classes in the 2009-2015 period (%)

Monthly income class	Year*					
	2009	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Up to ½ minimum wage	8,0	6,9	7,8	7,3	7,4	7,2
From ½ to 1 minimum wage	17,1	16,7	17,8	16,8	17,6	18,0
From 1 to 2 minimum wages	21,9	22,5	23,2	23,5	23,3	24,1
From 2 to 3 minimum wages	7,7	9,1	7,8	9,6	9,9	8,5
From 3 to 5 minimum wages	6,7	6,0	7,0	5,6	6,5	6,1
From 5 to 10 minimum wages	3,9	4,1	3,6	3,8	4,0	3,9
From 10 to 20 minimum wages	1,5	1,4	1,2	1,4	1,4	1,4
More than 20 minimum wages	0,5	0,5	0,4	0,5	0,5	0,4
No income	31,1	30,4	29,0	29,1	27,7	29,4
No declaration	1,5	2,6	2,0	2,4	1,8	1,1
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Minimum wage (R\$)	465,00	540,00/ 545,00	622,00	678,00	724,00	788,00

Source: IBGE - Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios-PNAD.

*There is no data for the year 2010 because the PNAD research is not undertaken in the years when there is a Demographic Census.

By the values by income class presented, Chart 1 indicates that almost half of the Brazilian population that has some amount of monthly income makes up to two minimum wages. On the sum of the first three classes of monthly income, the percentage varied from 47,1%, in 2009, to 49,2% in 2015. Still on these classes, migration or movement between them can be identified, the number of individuals who make up to ½ of minimum wage was reduced from 8%, in 2009, to 7,2% in 2015, whereas the percentages of the higher two classes advanced during the same period of time. For the class that makes more than half to one minimum wage, the percentage went from 17,1%, in 2009, to 18% in 2015, and in the same direction, the income class that makes more than 1 up to 2 minimum wages went from 21,9%, in 2009, to 24,1% in 2015.

These movements may be partly explained by the inflation control policies and by inflationary recomposition of the minimum wage which maintained the purchasing power of families. This scenario enabled the generation of employment and the increase of real-value wages for families. Therefore, the important factors that can also explain these changes of income classes would be those related to public programs for income transfer⁷, the rise of schooling levels and changes in the labour market (Souza; Carvalhaes, 2014; Paula; Pires, 2017).

Another aspect that must be considered refers to the constancy of the percentage of monthly average income classes where professionals with the highest schooling levels could be found – master and doctorate –, as it will be further discussed later in this paper. That is, the monthly average income class of more than 5 and up to 10 minimum wages and the class of more than 10 and up to 20 minimum wages, where percentages, in the analysed period, presented little alteration.

When the percentages of the year 2015 are compared to the ones from the previous year, data shows that the political and social crisis which started in 2014 harshly affected the income of the population. There was a percentage decrease of people who made more than two monthly minimum wages, except for those with a monthly income of 10 to 20 minimum wages. Values were dislocated which caused the increase of people with no income and also those who made ½ to two minimum wages.

Specifically about Brazil, in the first few years of the 21st century, it can be said that:

After an expansion period (2004-2013), in which the average growth rate was 4% (per year), accompanied by a process of better income distribution and the decrease of poverty, an abrupt, strong and prolonged recession started in 2014 and went on into the 2015-2016 period, with a negative average GDP growth of -3,7%, accompanied by worse social indicators (Paula; Pires, 2017, p. 125, translated).

There was a decrease of social inequality in Brazil in the first decade of the 21st century but since 2014 the country has been expe-

riencing a prolonged and strong recession. That being said, Brazil still remains one of the most unequal countries in the world.

Academic elite in Brazil and professionals with a postgraduate degree

When it is about Brazil we must ask ourselves who belongs to the so-called *academic elite*, what are its features and some controversies surrounding its analysis.

Under the name *academic elite* there are two lines of investigation. One of them is set on investigating *students* inside tertiary education institutions and their school trajectories and economic situation (Almeida; Nogueira, 2002; Almeida, 2006). Other investigations consider as their analysis subject *academic professionals* who are active in tertiary education or in research institutions (Brandão; Lellis, 2003; Café et al., 2011; Carrazco Lopez, 2014; Guimarães, 2019).

The term academic profession indicates that there can be different groups and that hierarchy is established between them. According to Schwartzman y Balbachevsky (1992) there are three distinct groups of academic professors in Brazil with different levels of training and schooling who act in different institutions and consequently with different employment and salary links. The authors classify the three groups as: (i) more qualified professors with research grants participating in academic associations in Brazil and overseas; (ii) professors with average qualification and small scientific production and (iii) those with low academic specialization, no stability, who teach a great number of classes and who work in different institutions – *the academic proletarian* (Schwartzman; Balbachevsky, 1992, p.18-19).

Academic professionals who belong to the academic elite are attached to tertiary education and research systems inside and outside them, they are “a minority that tries to influence relevant decisions and the public opinion, with which they would be complying with characteristics that would allow them to be considered as elite academics” (Carrazco Lopez, 2014, p. 87). That is, it is a professional with a *certain* academic background who exerts *certain* influence on others. One wonders what the role of academic training is and how the relations of power of that minority are established or identified. It must be considered that its members hold postgraduate degrees, preferentially doctorate degrees, and it must be considered that they present three characteristics: they act in the media, they belong to a system of researchers and to prestigious higher learning institutions (Carrazco Lopez, 2014, p. 18). Individuals are also considered as part of cultural elites or intellectual elites.

Such characteristics of the academic elite professionals remind us of Bourdieu's (1994) explanation on the configuration of the scientific field. According to him, that field

[...] is always a place of struggle which is *more or less unequal* between agents unequally provided with specific capital, therefore under unequal conditions to appropriate the product of scientific work (and also, in certain cases, of external benefits such as economic or political gratifications) that they produce with their *objective collaboration*, since the groups of competitors put into play an array of available scientific means of production (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 144, emphasis by the author).

The Bourdieu's arguments (1994)⁸ are still valid in the present and pertinent to understanding the processes of professional evaluation of professors and academic researchers and the struggle for the monopoly of scientific competence throughout the 21st century in different countries. Bourdieu considered that the academic elite of professors is heterogeneous and that it must be analysed starting from the identification of their struggles – which consists of material and symbolic conditions – which occur through conflicts and consensus within them and also in relation to the different ones in the field (other elites or the people).

The struggles for the (re)production of scientific authority involve having the press, research funding institutions and also higher learning institutions under control. Regarding financing institutions, they are accompanied by hierarchies with productivity criteria based on postgraduate degrees, research experience, the typology and *quality* of publications; this so that there is the grant permission to the plaintiff. In Brazil, one example is the National Scientific and Technological Council (*Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico*-CNPq) which offers the productivity grant with a three-level hierarchy⁹ and which aims to be “destined to researchers who stand out amongst their peers” (Capes, 2019).

Another example of a struggle established by the academic elite of professors occurs inside higher learning institutions and refers to the definition of different academic policies, including the internal policy for professional training and its links to corporative professional entities and to government policies. Such policies are intended to establish differences between undergraduate and, above all, postgraduate (master and doctorate) degrees, relating to credential typology, field of knowledge, number of places and access criteria. Based on this aspect, it is understood that higher education is, at the same time, a place of change and a place of internal social conservation - for professors, researchers or students - and for those who are outside it.

In 2000, the share of the Brazilian population which held schooling levels up to postgraduate degree level was 0,18% (IBGE, 2003) and in 2010 that figure went up to 0,41% (IBGE, 2012). In 2013 Brazil had 7,6 individuals who held a doctorate degree for each 100,000 inhabitants, which means that the number of degree holders exceeds only Mexico (4,2) and Chile (3,4) amongst countries from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – OECD. From 1996 to 2014 there were, in the Brazilian population, 168.143 doctorate degree holders and 445.562 master degree holders (CGEE, 2016; Galvão et al., 2016).

According to the data presented by the CGEE report (2016) between 2009 and 2014 there was a 35,9% growth rate of the number of postgraduate courses in Brazil and there was a steady growing pace year after year during that period. In 2009 there were 2.679 master courses and 1.422 doctorate courses and in 2014 those figures were, respectively, 4.101 and 2.202. There were, respectively, growth rates of 35,3% and 37,4%. That is, the number of doctorate courses had a larger increase than that of master courses. In 2014, there were 27 thousand master degree holders and in 2017 that number reached approximately 50 thousand individuals.

Professionals with a master and doctorate degree are mostly linked to public institutions, in the Brazilian federal government or state governments¹⁰ throughout the 21st century, although professional performance in private institutions has been expanding (CGEE, 2016, Galvão et al., 2016). Thus, “the area that employs the greatest number of individuals with a master and doctorate degree in Brazil is the one of entities whose main economic activity is education, especially higher learning conglomerates”, area to which belonged 75% of all titled doctors in Brazil from 1996 to 2014 (Galvão et al., 2016, p. 156).

A complementary analysis of the group of the academic elite refers to the identification of the personal characteristics of their group in terms of gender and colour or their regional location in Brazil. As for the gender of Brazilian elite researchers who hold a productivity grant from CNPq, specifically, statistical data shows that, from all grants per year, in 2007, 33,7% were addressed to females and in 2015 that figure went up to 35,5%. Although there has been an increase of grants for professional females, data indicates that: it's a mostly male elite! If the highest level of the grant hierarchy is considered, that is, senior grants, in 2015 grants addressed to males accounted for 75,8% of all distributed grants. That is, the higher the hierarchy of elite researchers from CNPq, the more male individuals there will be.

Professionals who hold a postgraduate degree: economic elite, too?

The economic elites are mentioned but not widely studied in the economy or social sciences area and there are some controversies as well as consensus on its use (Figueroa; Renteria, 2016; Atria et al., 2017). According to Jiménez and Solimano (2012, p. 7) the economic elites are composed of “a minority that concentrates a high percentage of national income, much higher than their numeric importance as part of the population, and that controls a significant proportion of the ownership of productive resources of a country”. Furthermore, according to them, the economic school considers three types of elite:

- a) talent elite (in technological and academic innovation),
- b) business elites basically dedicated to the creation of productive wealth
- c) the political elites with emphasis on the international mobility dimension of elites in a time

of globalization and growing interdependence between countries (Jiménez; Solimano, 2012, p. 11).

There tends to be a consensus that the term is directly related to economic inequality, specifically the concentration of wealth that results from income inequality. According to Piketty's arguments (2014) on the different origins of income inequality it can be considered that the economic elite can be heterogeneous. That said, the following can be considered as belonging to an economic elite: a group of workers which charges high wages if compared to the others and that lives off their work's income, individuals who hold high managerial positions in the economy or the owners of great amounts of economic capital - in the case of this group, entrepreneurs or business elites can also be included.

Therefore, how to identify economic elites? Who are the rich and the very rich?

There are different criteria considered by the institutions that analyse (in)equality in Brazil and around the world, which makes it difficult to be theoretically and methodologically precise. Some consider inequality amongst the people, others establish classes based on social stratification, for instance. There are economists that consider that the rich are equivalent to 5% and the super-rich equivalent to 1% of the population (Jiménez; Solimano, 2012, p. 11; Atria et al., 2017, p. 22). Others refer to the analysis of the distribution of income by dwelling, using the Gini Coefficient¹¹ or not, considering extracts A and B as the two highest and C as the middle class (Jiménez; Solimano, 2012).

To clarify to the reader the criteria that will be considered, it will be regarded as economic elites *the groups of the monthly income classes of more than 10 minimum wages, the 1.8%* (Table 1). The groups of workers in relation to 98,2% of the Brazilian population will be practically and exclusively considered and the wealth of great economic capital holders will not be evidenced. Souza (2016) argues that the statistics of dwelling undertaken by IBGE are not enough to distinguish the rich and super-rich and that for both it would be necessary to consider not only earned income but also all assets declared to tax administration, in Brazil known as *Receita Federal*.

The studies that analyse the economic elites inside tertiary education, as well as those who are dedicated to the academic elites, contemplate the analysis of the students (Almeida; Nogueira, 2002; Almeida, 2006) and there are others on the trajectories and work conditions of professors or researchers (Brandão; Lellis, 2003).

Almeida (2006) states that there is a tendency to consider that students who attend public universities belong to the economic elite in Brazil and that there is an indiscriminate use of the term because not all of them belong to those elites with more economic power. Despite being a public institution, depending on the field of knowledge, on the quantity of locations, on the working hours (day or night), for example, it can be considered that there are university careers with a larger demand of individuals from classes with better incomes than others. Ristoff (2014,

p. 734), through analysis of the socioeconomic profile surveys of Brazilian university students, shows that the students who have a monthly family income of over 10 minimum wages are in the careers of Medical School, Dental School, Law and Psychology.

Discussing precisely the analysis of our subject, we highlight the research of Brandão and Lellis (2003). They have studied the profiles of professors from higher learning institutions as academic elites and educative strategies of their families by using qualitative and quantitative methodologies in a group which was part of a prestigious institution compared to the other institutions in Brazil. One of the conclusions of the authors was that professors not only belong to the academic elite but also to the economic elite of Brazil, because their income was amongst the two top groups of the IBGE hierarchy (Brandão; Lellis, 2003, p. 513).

Chart 2 – Average monthly income of professionals who hold a master degree by field of knowledge in Brazil (2009-2014)*

Field of Knowledge	Years					
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total	8.880,30	9.289,81	9.263,00	9.329,25	9.415,02	9.719,21
Agricultural Sciences	7.033,83	7.652,19	7.580,84	7.764,32	7.799,82	8.284,20
Biological Sciences	6.488,78	6.976,50	6.904,80	6.956,03	6.980,46	7.132,06
Health Sciences	8.662,25	9.254,08	9.217,90	9.207,70	9.345,01	9.324,80
Exact and Earth Sciences	8.711,64	9.024,78	9.107,79	9.296,44	9.462,82	10.157,84
Human Sciences	6.748,32	7.154,86	7.131,51	7.190,48	7.304,49	7.661,03
Applied Social Sciences	12.543,19	12.698,10	12.552,54	12.524,11	12.453,20	12.429,33
Engineering	10.632,98	11.084,67	11.175,68	11.364,65	11.647,89	12.387,19
Linguistics, Literature and Fine Arts	5.798,54	6.303,40	6.307,11	6.364,10	6.491,81	6.821,97
Multidisciplinary	8.110,91	8.541,50	8.530,37	8.576,49	8.556,64	8.903,16

Source: CGEE (2016). Elaborated from the Coleta Capes 1996-2012 and Sucupira Platform 2013-2014 (Capes, MEC) and RAIS 2009-2014 (Ministry of Labour and Employment).

*According to the CGEE report it was considered as the monthly remuneration of each person the sum of all wages earned through all kinds of employment during the month of December under analysis, but excluding the 13th salary or extra payments.

On the average monthly remuneration of professionals with a master degree, data presented by CGEE (Table 2) indicate that throughout the 2009-2014 period there was a progressive increase, although there has been a slight decrease in 2011 if compared to the previous year. Therefore, if considered the first and last year of the period there was a 9,4% gain of remuneration. Social Sciences was the area that, throughout the period, maintained the same values, including a slight decrease in 2014 if compared to the 2009 value. The areas with the highest gains in remuneration throughout the period were the Engineering and Social and Earth Sciences professionals, both with a gain of 16% in the 2009-2014 period.

Comparison of the average monthly wages of the Brazilian population (Chart 1) and the wages of professionals who hold a master degree (Chart 2) shows that, in 2014, the average monthly wages of an individual with a master degree was R\$9.719,21 and the average monthly wages for the Brazilian population was R\$1.774,00 and the monthly minimum wage was R\$724,00. That is, the monthly average was equivalent to approximately 13 monthly minimum wages. In 2014, according to data from IBGE, 1,4% of the Brazilian population earned from 10 to 20 monthly minimum wages.

Therefore, if one is to rely on data from the CGEE report, on the value of the average remuneration of professionals with a master or doctorate degree there are differences not only if one considers the area of knowledge but also the type of legal nature of the institution where they work, gender, colour, time to obtain the title and the Brazilian region. Regarding the legal nature, one of the conclusions was that:

The category of employers which paid, in 2014, the highest average monthly wages was the government companies (R\$14.834,00) [...]. Professionals with a master degree who worked in the Federal Government came in second in the scale of best paid jobs and earned, in that year, R\$12.572,00. All of the other categories were paid wages under the average of professionals with a master degree (R\$9.719,00), and the category of employers classified as individual taxpayers was the one which paid the lowest wages, just R\$3.901,00 (CGEE, 2016, p. 208, translated).

As for the professionals who held a doctorate degree (Chart 3), on the average figures from the 2009-2014 period, the tendency was for progressive increase, with a 59% gain throughout the whole period. There were higher gains for professionals with a doctorate degree than for those with a master degree. Doctorate degree holders from the Applied Social Sciences area had a 40% increase in their monthly wages, differently from master degree holders who practically maintained the same values throughout the period. Furthermore, if compared to other areas, doctorate degree holders in the Applied Social Sciences were those who obtained the highest wages and the ones from the Linguistics, Literature and Fine Arts obtained the lowest.

Chart 3 – Average monthly wages of professionals with a doctorate degree by field of knowledge in Brazil (2009-2014)*

Field of Knowledge	Year					
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total	8.702,55	10.641,05	11.176,63	11.696,46	12.749,29	13.860,86
Agricultural Sciences	8.345,03	10.560,57	11.123,31	12.339,36	13.008,15	14.163,75
Biological Sciences	8.038,97	9.923,44	10.319,47	10.942,13	11.927,52	12.920,48
Health Sciences	8.708,19	10.405,34	11.008,62	11.426,89	12.443,91	13.386,12
Exact and Earth Sciences	8.312,73	10.421,17	10.894,12	11.321,23	12.595,00	13.953,15
Human Sciences	8.116,82	10.124,92	10.601,91	10.904,99	11.957,03	13.086,77
Applied Social Sciences	11.425,34	13.124,58	13.770,56	14.150,11	15.152,97	16.029,91
Engineer	9.450,17	11.563,67	12.176,04	12.634,92	13.968,58	15.327,95
Linguistics, Literature and Fine Arts	7.333,08	9.328,91	9.869,73	10.221,33	11.461,10	12.622,96
Multidisciplinary	8.719,23	10.254,53	10.723,56	11.186,23	12.089,20	13.180,08

Source: CGEE (2016). Elaborated from the Coleta Capes 1996-2012 and Sucupira Platform 2013-2014 (Capes, MEC) and RAIS 2009-2014 (Ministry of Labour and Employment).

*According to the CGEE report it was considered as the monthly remuneration of each person the sum of all wages earned through all kinds of employment during the month of December under analysis, but excluding the 13th salary or extra payments.

Regarding the comparison with wages of the Brazilian population in 2014, the highest and lowest wages amongst professionals in all areas of knowledge were equivalent, respectively, to values between 21 and 17 minimum wages. That is, doctorate degree holders accounted for 1.8% of the Brazilian population that earned these values.

Regarding the average remuneration of doctorate degree holders according to the nature of the institution, the finding was that:

Doctorate degree holders employed by government companies earned, in 2014, the highest average wages (R\$19.400,00) [...] Doctorate degree holders employed in the Federal Government came in second in the scale of the best paid and earned, in that year, R\$15.556,00. The other categories paid lower wages than the average of all doctorate degree holders (R\$13.861,00), and the category of employers classified as individual taxpayers was the one which paid the lowest wages, just R\$4.080,00 (CGEE, 2016, p. 228, translated).

If the highest and lowest average wages are considered in the different fields of knowledge, professionals with a master or doctorate degree belong to a Brazilian economic elite. Their average monthly wages are typically equivalent to more than 10 minimum wages, equal to only 1,8% of the Brazilian population. Therefore, it is considered to be a very heterogeneous group in view of the existence of a hierarchy of remuneration in the labor market as a result, among others, of the type of nature of the employing institution. Professionals with a master or doc-

torate degree who earned in 2014 R\$4.000,00, belonging to the *middle class* or 6,1% of the Brazilian population. We should not forget about the professionals who held a master or doctorate degree and were *unoccupied*¹² which, in 2009, accounted for 1,7% and in 2015 for 3,2%, according to data from the National Household Research (Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios-PNAD) (IBGE, 2019).

As Piketty states (2014), part of the social inequalities of individuals come from ownership of capital and their incomes. Since most of the doctorate degree holders in Brazil are originated from classes A and B, their remuneration is only one of several factors in perpetuating the vicious circle of income inequality in the country. Income from work reinforces social inequalities to the extent that wage differences, even in higher education institutions, persist.

Professionals who hold a master or doctorate degree in Brazil are mostly located in the higher learning fields. The number of university students in the country had a 31% increase in the 2009-2014 period. The Higher Learning Census in Brazil, in 2017, shows that the increase of students was higher in private institutions. In the distribution between institutions, most of the professors who held a doctorate degree were in public universities whereas most of the professors who held a master degree were in the private institutions.

Another important variable to explain income inequalities among professors is the internal disharmony in higher education institutions in relation to wages. Part of the professors from these institutions have precarious labor links, which causes lower wages as well as more restrictive labour rights. Furthermore, being originated from an economic elite as well as belonging to the academic elite provides the professors who holds a doctorate degree a social status reinforcing historical inequalities in Brazil. The expansion of higher education for the middle layers of society which started from the beginning of the current century partly displaced the social status of the individual who exclusively owned the university career for professionals with a master or doctorate degree.

The employment relationship, whether in public or private institutions, significantly influences the salaries of professionals with a master or doctorate degree. The average wages of public sector professionals are much higher if compared to the same private sector professionals. Working conditions and functions performed in each group, public or private, are also different. Traditionally, public institutions of higher education work on the teaching, research and extension triad. While private higher education institutions act basically on the education field, with rare exceptions.

Final Considerations

The studies on the elites year after year show a tendency that there is not a lot of research on the matter, especially in relation to all differ-

ent economic elites in Brazil. The difficulties encountered for the realization of this article have been of the theoretical order and especially because it revealed itself as a methodological challenge. There are different conceptions of elite or economic elite, an aspect which implies on choosing a criterion of economic classification of the population which was the most adequate to the analysis of the economic elite.

One of the methodological problems is due to the fact that the data that has been presented was all based on the monthly average. But it must be highlighted that, in statistics, when talking about wages it is not recommended that the average be used, the median should be used. That is because the average is strongly influenced by the presence of extreme values while the median tends to not be affected by the values of wages outside the pattern. In the face of this evidence, if we have a much higher figure, the average will also be higher, resulting consequently in a super-estimated analysis. Once a heterogeneity in the remuneration has been identified, the statistical analysis of the average tends to deceive the conclusions about reality.

Specifically on the data, it is concluded that individuals with post-graduate degrees belong to an academic elite, since they represent only 0.50% of the Brazilian population. Despite the criticism of the use of the type of statistics for the analysis of the average wages, the fact that such professionals are mostly classified within the population with higher income levels and considering them as a rich population or as extracts A and B, their condition allows one to state that they also belong to an economic elite. Therefore, we identified the existence of a heterogeneity of remunerations below and above the monthly average as a result of the different degrees, area of knowledge and institution where they work. In addition, it would be necessary to analyse the performance of sociodemographic variables as relevant as gender, colour, time to obtain the degree and the Brazilian region on the remuneration of professionals, aspects that we have not contemplated in this article, and that also interfere with their condition of belonging or transiting between different income groups.

The difficulties encountered by individuals to reach high levels of education in Brazil, such as the master and doctorate degrees, make this social segment reduced in numerical terms and highly scarce in the labour market, thus making up one of the main economic elites of the country.

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Notes

- 1 The main pieces of work belong to the Political and Social Brazilian Elites Observatory, linked to the Federal University of Paraná, which has an investigation net comprised of different institutions that analyse large categories by type of elite: bureaucratic elites, parliamentary and political party elites, judiciary elites, intellectual elites and social elites (entrepreneurs).

- 2 Despite controversy in the Sociology of professions, it can be considered that a professional is the person who has, as a minimum, a graduate career, that is, a tertiary level career.
- 3 It must be clarified that this article considers that the antinomy of inequality is equality and the antinomy of difference is similarity. That way, equality is a universal condition and is (or it should be) a basic right of democracy.
- 4 The Sociology of elites originated, basically, from the theories produced by Vilfredo Pareto and Cateano Mosca, mostly in opposition to two aspects of the Marxist theories. The first refers to the fact that society division is comprised of dominant groups and dominated groups, which is a universal and unchangeable condition. The second corresponds to the idea of what the *dominant group* is. According to Pareto, individuals with superior qualities belong to the elite and, according to Mosca, the elite, being an organized group, is capable of control over all the others who are disorganized. (Bottomore, 1988, p. 122-123).
- 5 In Sociology literature on elites, it is also known as *the others*, *non-elite*, *counter-elite* and *the have-nots*, for instance, even though there can be different meanings for those terms.
- 6 Although there are different concepts, it is considered here that “equality is judged by comparing some specific conditions of a person (such as income, wealth, happiness, liberty, opportunities, rights or the need of achievement) with the same conditions of another (Sen, 2014, p. 14).
- 7 In Brazil, one of the public programs for income transfer was undertaken through the *Programa de Bolsa Escola* (School Aid Program), implemented in 2001 by the Fernando Henrique government. It was then renamed to *Programa Bolsa Familia* (Family Aid Program) in an amplified version with more resources and purposes in the 2003/2004 period by the Lula Government. In short, these programs consist of financial aid to families with children and teenagers and aim to break poverty conditions.
- 8 According to the consulted translation, the article by Pierre Bourdieu was originally published under the title *Le champ scientifique* en *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* in 1976.
- 9 Category 1 which possesses 4 levels by letter (A, B, C, D), the researcher is compared to their peers and their data for the past 10 years is considered. Category 2, which has no level specification, will have its productivity assessment according to publications and postgraduate papers, both in the last five years. There is also the Senior-SR Researcher scholarship for the individual who stands out in their area as a leader and paradigm, they must have been a 15-year grantee of category 1 and/or 2, consecutive or not, in addition to remaining in research activity and training of researchers.
- 10 The political denomination used in Brazil was employed. As for Spain, a similar denomination is *province*.
- 11 Idealized by the Italian statistic Corrado Gini, it is used to measure income inequality inside a country or to measure any way of unequal distribution. The Gini coefficient is a number between 0 and 1, where 0 corresponds to perfect equality (everyone has the same income) and where the value 1 corresponds to perfect inequality (one individual has all incomes and all the others have no income).

12 The IBGE methodology classifies as *unoccupied* the individuals which, in the week of reference for the research, were not working, who took some effective providence to get work in the reference period of 30 days and that were ready to take it. It also includes those who did not take effective providence to get a job in the 30-day period because they had already gotten a job that was to begin after the reference week.

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