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## **Argentina**

### **Mapping ethnic and educational inequalities in an uncharted territory. Argentinean research traditions, their contributions and challenges**

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#### **Abstract**

This article offers a systematic review of sociological, anthropological and educational research on the relationship between race/ethnicity and educational inequality in Argentina during the period 1980-2010. Five major research traditions are identified: (1) Mapping educational access, (2) Intercultural educational policies, (3) Language conflict and schooling, (4) Difference and diversity, and (5) School texts as a means of othering, with research on 'difference and diversity' being the most dominant research tradition. Most of the research conducted in Argentina focuses on indigenous minority groups, is qualitative and offers clues about how social, policy and educational discourses contribute to disadvantage some minority ethnic groups' educational experiences and schooling. This body of research is written in Spanish and mainly developed through academic institutions and funding streams, with researchers focusing on and taking a more critical approach to social policy developments; which are characterized in Argentina by a shift from more assimilation orientated policies to policies that emphasise the reality and importance of multiculturalism.

#### **Table of contents**

##### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. *The Argentinean education system*
- 1.2. *Immigration to Argentina*
- 1.3. *Indigenous people in Argentina*
- 1.4. *Educational policies: from homogenization to partial recognition of difference*

##### 2. Methodology

##### 3. Research on ethnicity and educational inequality in Argentina

- 3.1. Mapping the educational access of indigenous and immigrant students: an emerging tradition
- 3.2. *Intercultural educational policies*
- 3.3. *Language conflict and schooling*
- 3.4. *'Difference' and 'diversity': perspectives and identities*
- 3.5. *School texts as a means of 'othering'*

## **1. Introduction**

Despite the existence of indigenous people and immigrants, Argentina has until recently denied, silenced and marginalised socio-cultural differences and particularities. Up until the 1980s, a homogenising cultural paradigm permeated educational policies and it is only recently that cultural and linguistic differences and diversity have been legally and culturally acknowledged. From the 1980s onwards, 'diversity' and 'difference' have entered into the educational policy agenda, triggered by the globalisation of these concerns as well as the recognition of prior indigenous struggles demanding their rights. For instance, in 2006, the Education Law created a new type of education: 'Intercultural and Bilingual Education', which was targeted at indigenous communities.

Concerns surrounding 'cultural differences' have been unfolding into complex socio-economic and political scenarios that have impacted on the structuration of the field of knowledge production in education and the configuration of research traditions. The last three decades have witnessed dramatic political changes: the return of the democracy and its consolidation, the deepening and dismissal of neoliberal economic reforms, the shrinking and growth of the state's role and intervention, and severe socio-economic crises such as those triggered by the hyperinflation of 1989 and the bankruptcy of the financial system in 2001, followed by a period of economic prosperity. These social, economic and political fluctuations have affected the boundaries, levels of autonomy, and power relations between players and research agendas in the field of educational knowledge.

This article maps research traditions examining ethnic and educational inequalities in basic education in Argentina from the 1980s up to 2010. The lack of any previous similar analyses implies a considerable challenge and one which has involved acknowledging not only the history of the education system but also the nature of the recent developments in the field of educational knowledge production. This paper offers a typology of research traditions, which are described via a set of studies that have addressed specific research themes or topics, and have deployed similar theoretical tools and methodological strategies (Stevens 2007; Stevens *et al.* 2011). Boundaries between traditions are not clear and tend to overlap; however, each revolves around specific educational research concerns involving indigenous people and/or immigrants.

This article is organised into four main sections. The first section presents basic information regarding social and educational policies targeted at indigenous people and immigrants both

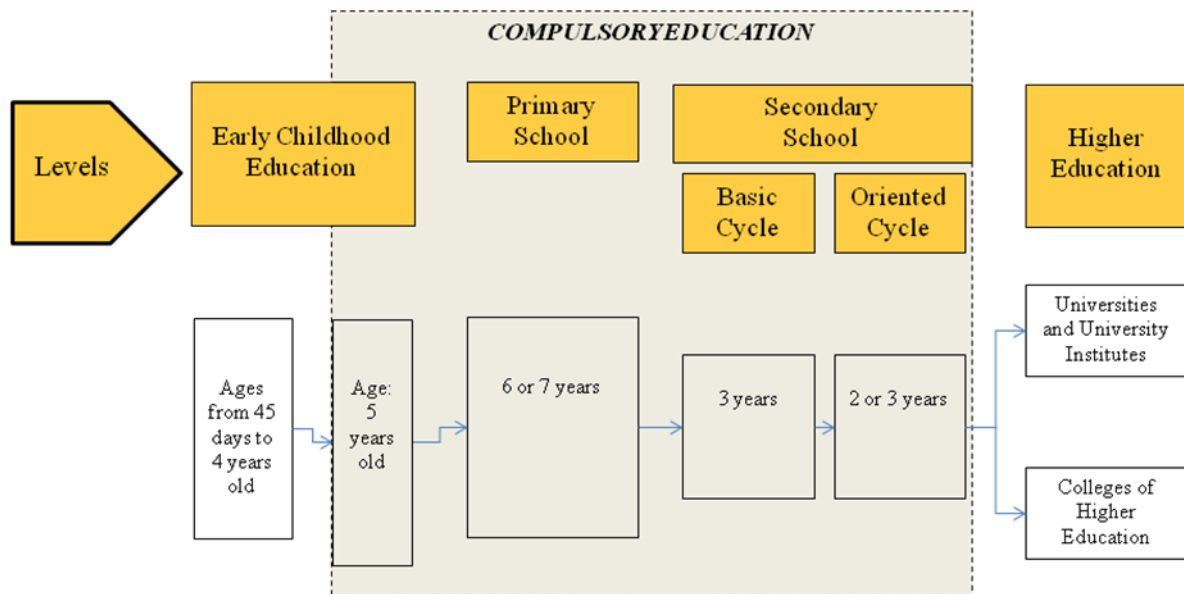
before and during the period under analysis. It also depicts the current socio-demographic situation of these groups. Moreover, it offers key data on the Argentine education system, such as structure, governance, participation of the state and private sector, and recent democratising trends of basic schooling. The second section presents the methodological strategy deployed to make 'visible' what previous studies have neglected. It describes a set of systematic and flexible criteria used for searching, identifying and sampling research on ethnic and educational inequalities in Argentina. The following sections explore the identified five research traditions in turn: 'Mapping educational access', 'Intercultural educational policies', 'Language conflict and schooling', 'Difference and diversity', and 'School texts as a means of othering'. After summarising the key findings of this article, the last section identifies potential territories to be charted by these expanding, rich and promising research traditions.

### **1.1. The Argentinean education system**

In Argentina, education is compulsory from age 5 to 17/18 (Law, 26.206)<sup>2</sup> and encompasses at least 12 school years (one for early childhood, six or seven for primary education and five or six years for secondary schooling). Primary education should offer an integrated basic and common education, whereas secondary schooling is composed of two different cycles: i) the basic and common cycle, and ii) the oriented cycle which includes different specialisations related to knowledge and the social and working world. Primary schooling became almost universal in the 1990s and secondary schooling has rapidly grown from a net school rate of 32% in 1970 to an estimated 81.4% in 2009 (Rivas *et al.* 2010; SITEAL 2011).<sup>3</sup> Similarly to other Latin American and African countries, if pupils do not achieve the expected educational standards for primary or secondary education, then they have to repeat the school year.

There are no centralised entrance exams or final general exams on completion of either level or pupils cannot be allocated to different types of schools or internal tracks within a school according to their educational achievement. Access to non-university institutions and to state universities is open: that means that any secondary school graduate was able to enrol in any degree without any further entrance requirement.

**Graph 1. Structure of the Argentinean National Education System (Law 26.206)**



The Argentinean National Education System consists of 4 levels (early childhood education, primary school, secondary school and higher education) and 8 types (modalidades) (organizational and/or curricular options of common education within one or more educational levels). The Intercultural and Bilingual Education is one of them.

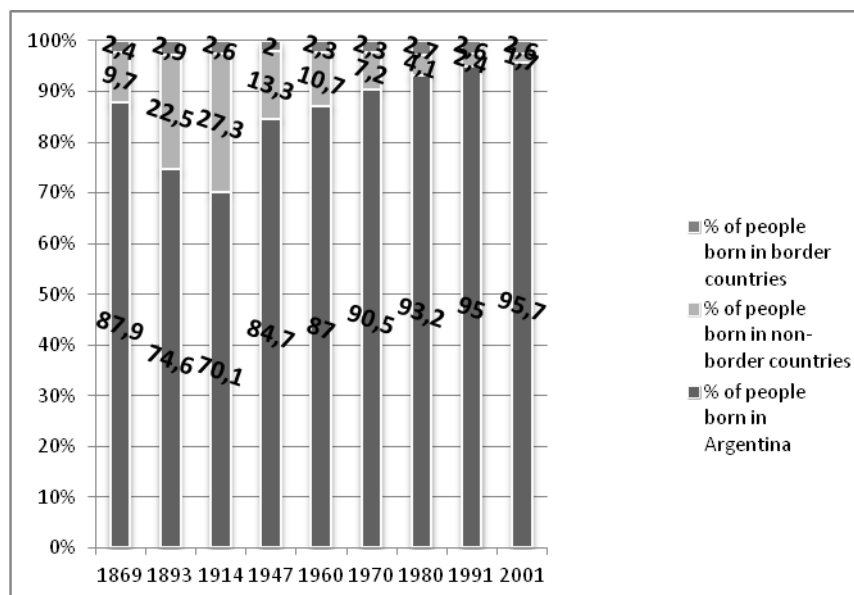
Up until the 1960s, the Argentinean education system was highly centralised and monopolist (Narodowski and Andrada 2001). By mid 1990s, provincial authorities directly funded, managed, staffed and supervised state primary, secondary and tertiary education, whilst the National Ministry of Education monitored the educational system by producing and evaluating data concerning educational quality and by giving financial and technical support to compensate for inequalities between regions or social groups (López 2002; Palamidessi *et al.* 2007). From the mid-1990s the national government started to gather data from schools, students and educational achievement (National Annual Census of schools and students and Educational Standards Assessment Survey (*Operativo Nacional de Evaluación Educativa*)).

Regarding the participation of the public/state and private sectors in education, the educational transformation of the 1990s continued a process which started during the 1950s/1960s and which deepened in the 2000s: the increase of the private sector's powers and coverage. In 2010, around 50% of pupils enrolled in primary and secondary education were in state schools (DiNIECE 2010) and there is evidence of socio-economic segregation between types of school sectors (Rivas *et al.* 2010).

## 1.2. Immigration to Argentina

Since the middle of the XIX century, specialist literature has identified different migratory patterns interwoven with wider socio-economic process that transcend national boundaries (Devoto 2003; Mármora 2002).<sup>4</sup> Up to the mid XIX century, the majority of immigrants were mainly from European origin (Italy and Spain). Poverty, wars, racism, and/or religious/ideological intolerance forced them to flee to Argentina (Oteiza *et al.* 2000). At the beginning of the XX century, they represented almost a third of the Argentinean population (see below Graph 2). The World Wars, the 1930 crisis and the concomitant aggravation of the Argentinean economic situation dramatically changed this trend in the following decades (Devoto 2003). By 2001, non-border immigrants represented only 1.7% of the total population (603.824) (INDEC 2001).

**Graph 2. Percentage of people born in Argentina, border countries, and non-border countries 1869-2001**



Source: our elaboration based on the National Population Census 1869, 1893, 1914, 1947, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1991, 2001

Border countries immigrants have historically represented around 2% or 3% of the total population (Devoto 2003). From the 1950s the decrease of European immigration made them more visible and easier targets of racism: they were not perceived or defined as 'immigrants' by the media and lay discourses. They were labeled as '*cabecitas negras*' (little black heads), derogatory term that refers to people migrating to urban areas attracted by the industrialization process that took place at that time. In the public opinion, border countries immigrants and

Argentinean rural migrants were perceived as belonging to the same underprivileged social class and racially produced as 'black' (Grimson 2006). In 2001, border countries immigrants represented 2.6% of the population (923.496) (INDEC 2001).

Non-border and border immigrants have historically settled in the central region of the country (City of Buenos Aires and the metropolitan area of the province of Buenos Aires), and in the provinces of Patagonia (such as Santa Cruz, Río Negro, Neuquén, Chubut and Tierra del Fuego). In 2001, in terms of nationalities, immigrants from American countries represented the largest group, followed by European (mainly from Italy and Spain) and Asians (largely from Korea). The great majority of American immigrants come from border countries and Peru (Cerrutti 2009).

Immigrant pupils are a poorly studied group. Available statistics focus on border countries immigration. Cerrutti (2009), using data from the *Encuesta Complementaria de Migraciones Internacionales 2002/2003*, states that enrollment rates of immigrant children diminished after the age of 14 and highly varied across nationalities.

### **1.3. Indigenous people in Argentina**

Historically, there have been few official data sources recording the existence of indigenous communities in Argentina.<sup>5</sup> Ethnic groups have been misrecognised as such by the national and provincial states until the 1980s. The National Population Census 2001 was the first one that included questions to identify people who consider themselves or someone else in their households indigenous.<sup>6</sup> In 2004, a special survey (*Encuesta Complementaria de Pueblos Indígenas (ECPI)*) was carried out to gather information about a representative sample of indigenous households. It identified 30 indigenous communities. The largest ones are the Mapuche, Toba, Kolla and Wichí. According to this survey, in 2004, 600.329 people considered themselves or at least one of their antecessors indigenous. They represented 1.7% of the total country population. In terms of their geographical location, the majority of the indigenous communities were in the Northwest region (mainly based in the provinces of Jujuy and Salta).

Regarding educational information of these groups, students in Bilingual and Intercultural Education represented 0.5% of the total number of students enrolled in common kindergarten, primary and secondary schooling in 2010 (Alonso *et al.* 2011). Schools are classified by the central government in indigenous and non-indigenous schools. The former should receive BIE and should be made up for a majority of indigenous students (50% or more). Following general

demographic patterns, the majority of these schools are in the Northern and Southern provinces. In terms of the students' educational trajectory, indigenous pupils in primary schools have high levels of repetition (25,4%) during the first school years. This trend decreases in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade (5.7%) due to mainly high levels of drop out (28%) (Alonso *et al.* 2011).<sup>7</sup> Regarding indigenous secondary schooling, the repetition rate is lower than that of pupils from rural state schools.<sup>8</sup> For instance, for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, while the repetition rate is of 13.5% for pupils in rural schools, that represents 8.6% for indigenous pupils (Alonso *et al.* 2011). Analysts suggest that this lower level of repetition could be explained by the high levels of drop out of the indigenous pupils compared to non-indigenous pupils.

#### **1.4. Educational policies: from homogenization to partial recognition of difference**

Up to the 1980s, the education system played a key role in the cultural assimilation and in the denial of linguistic and cultural differences of indigenous people and European immigrants (Quijada 2003). Central aspects of the educational policy have been the '*castellanización*' of its population (the inculcation through schooling of Spanish as the legitimate language), and the teaching of Argentinean national history (as the shared past of a wider community) (Acuña 2010). The institutional assumption that all children spoke Spanish, together with the symbolic and physical invisibility of indigenous communities and their social marginalization, has been part and parcel of the discursive production of Argentina as being a by-product of European immigration. Argentina has been defined as a 'melting pot' and Argentinean people as 'coming from the boats' (Quijada 2003). This metaphor contributed to the definition of Argentina as different from the rest of Latin American countries and comparable to white European countries, producing it as a white 'imagined community' (Anderson 1993).

With regard to indigenous communities, from the 1980s onwards, 'diversity', 'inter-culturalism', and 'multiculturalism' (amongst other concepts) became pivotal notions in educational, academic and policy debates. In this new scenario –triggered by global concerns around these issues and by historical political struggles in Latin America and Argentina-, indigenous groups, their ethnic identities and cultural differences started to be recognized. For example, during the 1980s, the City of Buenos Aires, Salta, Misiones, Río Negro, Formosa and Jujuy introduced different types of legislation recognizing them as political actors. At national level, in 1985, the National Law Nº 23.302 declared that the state should respond to indigenous communities' needs and cultural specificities, and should promote their socio-economic

participation. In 1994, the new Argentinean National Constitution not only recognized the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of the Argentinean indigenous communities, but also established that the state had to respect indigenous people's right to bilingual and intercultural education.

Educational policies were deeply shaped by this wider legal rights' agenda. For instance, the Federal Law of Education (1993)<sup>9</sup> promoted more freedom to develop curricular contents at provincial and school levels in order to reflect regional, provincial and local particularities. This paved the way to the development of indigenous curriculum in different jurisdictions. This Law also expressed the need to implement provincial programs oriented to the 'rescue' and strengthening of indigenous language and cultures. In addition to this, at the end of the 1990s, the national government executed various educational programs targeted at improving schooling and promoting curricular innovation in indigenous schools. In 1999, for the first time, national kindergarten and basic general education indigenous teaching titles were created. In 2006, the new Education Law 26.206 created the educational type 'Intercultural and Bilingual education' for kindergarten, primary and secondary schooling. It aims to accomplish the constitutional right of indigenous communities to receive education that 'contributes to preserve and strengthen their cultural patterns, languages, vision and ethnic identity' (Education Law 26.206: Art. 52, our translation).

The historical production of official statistics concerning immigrants and indigenous people reflects the uneven interest of the State in these groups. As mentioned above, while population censuses had gathered basic socio-demographic and educational information on immigrants since 1869, indigenous people as ethnic groups remained statistically 'invisible' until the 2000s. Only during the 2000s, the central government intensified the production of quantitative information on immigrants and indigenous people. With regards to educational statistics, although the National Annual Educational Census (*Relevamiento Anual*) has gathered since 1996 basic information on schools, teachers and students, and also on the number and nationality of foreign students, it only started collecting data on the numbers of indigenous students in 2007.

The methodological and analytical sections will show how the misrecognition of immigrants and indigenous people by the State (whether at policy or data information production level) has strongly influenced the ways in which knowledge about ethnicity and educational inequalities have been produced.



## 2. Methodology

While some reviews of educational research focus on the context of Argentina (such as Milstein *et al.* (2007) on educational anthropology; Llomovate (1992) and Paviglianiti (1989) on educational research; and Palamidessi *et al.* (2007) on the history of the educational research field), this is the first study to date that aims to (systematically) review research on race and ethnic inequalities in education in Argentina. As such, it maps “what is out there”, identifying highlights and tracing boundaries of a very complex and dynamic scenario. The aim of this exercise imposes limits to our own analysis: issues that have been neglected in the existent literature will only appear marginally in our final section as potential future research endeavours. In developing a comprehensive review of research and in considering time and resource constraints and access and availability of literature, this study employs the following parameters in sampling literature for review: i) Argentinean studies with a broad sociological approach, including studies primarily classified as anthropological and educational studies; ii) research conducted between 1980 and 2010; iii) analyses on basic and compulsory education; and iv) different types of scholarly productions; books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and official reports.

The traditional low structuration of the sub-field of sociology of education in the country, as well as the marginal attention paid to ethnicity and education<sup>10</sup>, has demanded that this study includes other academic fields (anthropology and education sciences), and their questions, methods and contributions. In Argentina, since the 1980s the newly born field of educational anthropology has played a fundamental role in the development of studies on ethnicity and education, looking at developing critical interpretations of school life, and providing useful insights on topics related to socio-cultural diversity and social inequalities (Achilli 2001; Milstein *et al.* 2007).

Due to the history of the educational research field in Argentina (which has until very recently promoted the publication of outputs only academic journals in Spanish) (Palamidessi *et al.* 2007), articles were searched for in educational, anthropological and sociological journals written in Spanish indexed in the most reputable academic journal database in Argentina (produced by the *Centro Argentino de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica* (CAICYT)) and in Latin America (called LATINDEX and created by an international network of academic organizations from Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal).<sup>11</sup> This initial search led to the identification of ten academic educational journals. However, interviews with key

researchers led to the detection of three more well-known journals that have yet to be indexed. Every issue of these journals was searched; 12 out of the 13 journals were initiated during the 1990s (n=7) or after 2000 (n=5) and only one in the late 1980s. 2268 articles were checked and only 22 papers were focused on ethnicity and educational inequalities. Six anthropological (1088 articles) and nine sociological or social sciences (632 articles) journals were also checked<sup>12</sup> and these publications encompassed only four relevant articles.

Due to the low number of articles identified in this first stage, the search needed to be widened to include other academic journals in sociology, education and anthropology and other publication types, such as books and government reports. Relevant Argentinean centralised catalogues or databases did not exist when this review was carried out. Searches were performed in selected libraries in the City of Buenos Aires and also in the province of Buenos Aires together with academic browsers (such as Google Scholar) on the internet. Key producers of educational research in each discipline were identified, such as publishing companies, national universities, think tanks, non-governmental organisations, and central and provincial governmental agencies. Previous research on knowledge production in education, and informal interviews with key figures in the field also led to the identification of relevant publications (such as books) and a wide range of organisations and academics involved in the production of potentially relevant studies. Using this information, a multi-layered strategy was deployed to obtain further research outputs, ranging from requests to individual academics from different national universities for copies of their work and to research departments of provincial educational authorities, to visiting a wide range of institutional websites. This approach allowed the results from the first search to be enriched.

After identifying around 300 publications that seemed to fall under the general search criteria, a sampling strategy was deployed in order to produce a database with relevant research outputs. To achieve this, the relevance of each publication was assessed by identifying its aims, key findings and date of publication. This resulted in a database containing 175 publications, including books, book chapters, journal articles and reports. Although conference proceedings were excluded from the database, we finally decided to include a few papers of this kind due to their unique and relevant character.

To analyse this set of publications, more detailed information regarding each one was gathered, such as its objectives, theoretical and methodological strategy, population described (indigenous and/or immigrants), level of education (initial, primary, or secondary), area (urban or

rural), region of the country, key findings and institutional affiliation of the author/s. With this data, commonalities and differences were identified across the publications. This allowed significant aspects of each tradition to be defined and difference or nuances within them to be recognised.

The summaries of these articles, books and reports were analyzed and included in different provisional research traditions according to their research questions, methodological strategy and theoretical approaches. With these preliminary analyses completed, one matrix per research tradition was constructed and this included key data such as target population, area, educational level, methodological strategy, theoretical approaches and key findings. The majority of the identified publications were from the 2000s, with a large group having been published in the 1990s and only a minority from the 1980s.

The composition of the assembled database also reflects the historical development of the education knowledge field in Argentina. In other words, research on ethnicity and educational inequalities follows the general development trends of this complex multi-disciplinary academic field. As mentioned above, the State's and academics' interest on ethnicity is recent and marginal. Since the return of the democracy in 1983, the field of educational knowledge has undergone major transformations that have impacted on the nature and scope of the research on ethnicity and educational inequalities. While at the beginnings of the 1980s insufficient and poorly trained staff, lack of funding, and severe organizational difficulties were key features of the research institutions (Palamidessi *et al.* 2007), recent changes in the national Science and Technology policies as well as the growth of the research activity in general have positively influenced knowledge production (Palamidessi *et al.* 2007; Pérez Lindo 2005). All of this, together with the rapid expansion and consolidation of regional catalogues, academic journals, and collective research outputs (SPU 2008), and a slow but steady trend to tighten peer review processes (via self-regulation and indexing), is leading to a more dynamic and self-regulated educational research field, which has boosted the rhythm of growth and the quality of the studies on ethnicity and education.

### **3. Research on ethnicity and educational inequality in Argentina**

Having described the methodological strategy and some aspects of the field of educational knowledge, the research traditions 'Mapping the educational access', 'Intercultural educational

policies', 'Language conflict and schooling', 'Difference and Diversity', and 'School texts as means of 'othering'' will now be examined in turn.

### ***3.1. Mapping the educational access of indigenous and immigrant students: an emerging tradition***

This emerging body of research mainly depicts the levels of educational access attained by indigenous people and immigrants by examining quantitative data. These reports have mostly been produced by experts working within government agencies or international organisations. The type of knowledge produced is descriptive and oriented towards policy decision-making. These analyses do not usually engage with any theoretical discussions.

Compared with other research traditions, fewer studies were identified in this group and most of them were produced from 2000 onwards. The late and under-developed statistical information and datasets by government agencies and/or non-governmental organisations explains the weakness and slow development of this research strand. Put more succinctly, the availability of data restricts the types of questions researchers can formulate. These reports explicitly acknowledge the limitations of the existing data sources in producing more complex analyses of the educational situation of these groups. During the 1980s and 1990s, the reasons for so few reports are due not only to the underdevelopment of official data but also to the lack of tradition of using resources from research to inform policy decision-making in education (Hernández 1988; Paviglianiti 1989).

While only three of the reports present data collected from the whole country (Alonso *et al.* 2007; Cerrutti 2009; UNICEF 2009)<sup>13</sup>, the remainder focus on particular regions. Some of the analyses consider the situation of these groups across different levels of the educational system (Alonso *et al.* 2007; Catalá *et al.* 2009; Cerrutti 2009; Costarelli 2008), while several examine only primary education (for example Fulco 1980; Moscato 1996; Padawer *et al.* 2010).

Indigenous groups have been the focus of much attention. Reports using secondary data sources have examined the coverage and types (public or private) of schools with indigenous students, as well as indigenous people's literacy levels, geographical distribution, and types of ethnic groups (Alonso *et al.* 2007; Avellaneda 2001; Costarelli 2008; Fischman 1993; Fulco 1980; Ministerio de Educación de Corrientes 2008; UNICEF 2009). Some of the reports have been produced to inform in the development of Intercultural Bilingual Education Schools.

These analyses demonstrate the unequal access and permanence of indigenous groups in the educational system (Cid and Paz 2004; Fischman 1993; UNICEF 2009). For instance, a recent

UNICEF study<sup>14</sup> (2009) asserts that at the national level, the vast majority of indigenous children aged between 5 and 14 years do attend primary school, a figure which is similar to national trends. However, in the case of the Mbyá Guaraní and Wichí communities, the enrolment rate of this age group is significantly lower (UNICEF 2009). Moreover, school enrolment rate of Mbyá Guaraní and Wichí girls and boys between 15 and 19 years was significantly lower than national trends. In this age group, more than a half had not completed primary education. Despite this grim scenario, the entrance age for primary education for girls and boys has been lowered over time.

Studies that generated their own data are limited to small areas of the country. These have been undertaken to produce useful data for improving the educational situation of the indigenous population in the region analysed. In so doing, they utilize surveys as the privileged data collection technique. For example, the Ministry of Education in the province of Corrientes in 2007 (Ministerio de Educación de Corrientes 2008) conducted a survey to determine head teachers', teachers' and students' attitudes towards the use of indigenous language in schools.

With respect to foreign students and immigrants, few reports could be identified. Two studies were carried out in the City of Buenos Aires and measured the number of foreigners enrolled at each educational level according to their nationality and geographical distribution within the city, and the evolution of immigrant students' enrolment rate over the last decade (Catalá *et al.* 2009; Padawer *et al.* 2010). Padawer *et al.* (2010), for instance, showed an increase in the number of foreign students enrolled in state primary schools in this city during the period 2000-08. At a national level, Cerrutti's report (2009) showed that the enrolment rate of foreign students is almost 100 per cent for primary education but it dramatically decreases for secondary and higher education to around 50 per cent.

The majority of the analyses is descriptive, with the study of Cid and Paz (2004) being an exception to this trend and the only one identified that generates explicative models based on the concept of discrimination, defined as unequal treatment under similar conditions. The study explored determining factors of educational achievement with a focus on ethnic differences. Regression models were used to identify educational exclusion processes based on discrimination towards the indigenous population in Salta. The authors compared the indigenous and non-indigenous population in order to establish whether there was discrimination experienced by the former group that could not be explained by other variables, such as poverty. They focused their attention on 'school attendance' and 'educational achievement' and argued

that there was evidence of discrimination towards students who lived in households with at least one indigenous person. The data showed that young indigenous people had to overcome more difficulties in order to attend school and to continue their education than their non-indigenous counterparts.

In sum, this research tradition focuses on describing educational access attained by indigenous people and immigrants, mainly using quantitative data. The introduction of new quantitative data gathering instruments has promoted its recent expansion. Studies are generally carried out by government agencies and international organizations and tend to be used for policy decision-making purposes.

### **3.2. Intercultural educational policies**

This rich research tradition focuses on the educational policies targeted at mainly indigenous people in Argentina from the inception of the Nation State onwards. Only a few studies focus on policies targeted at immigrant people (see Barbero and Roldán 1987; Citrinovitz 1991). It has notably grown during the last decade and it comprises qualitative analyses mainly carried out by anthropologists. Many studies have been commissioned by national or provincial governments and non-governmental organisations as part of the BIE policy development (see Arce 2007; Cervera *et al.* 2010; Hernández and Kleinerman 1999; MECT 2004; Novaro 2004; Wallis 2010). Others have been funded by academic organisations (Hirsh 2010; Hirsh and Serrudo, 2010; Serrudo 2010).

The research conducted, on the one hand, has examined policy texts or documents (such as national educational laws, educational programmes, and teachers' work statutes) and, on the other hand, has scrutinized the ways in which different individual and collective actors (such as provincial governments, teachers, and indigenous communities) interpret, redefine and resist them in different socio-economic, cultural and linguistic contexts.

The first strand of research is focused on studies that analyze policy texts and interpret them as the outcomes of complex interpretative processes stemming from social, economic and cultural struggles between different social groups (see for instance Barbero and Roldán 1987; Díaz and Alonso 2004; Hecht 2007; Hecht and Szulc 2006; Hirsch and Serrudo 2010; Serrudo 2010). Many focus on policy documents produced by the national and provincial states (see Alonso and Díaz 2004a; Bella 2007; Bordegaray and Novaro 2004; Falaschi *et al.* 2005; Hecht 2007, 2010; Hecht and Szulc 2006; Lanusse 2004; Serrudo 2010). Only a few pay any attention to

other 'producers' of educational documents. For example, Nicoletti (2002/2003) examined an educational document written by a key missionary within the Salesian Congregation of the Catholic Church, and Alonso and Díaz (2004b) produced an educational document together with the Mapuche community from Neuquén.

The majority of the analyses in this strand focus on two sets of educational policy documents: those produced by the central government at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and those introduced mainly from the 1980s onwards by the national and provincial governments. Bilingual and Intercultural Education (BIE) policies have been the centre of many analysts' attention (Briones 2004; Hirsch and Serrudo 2010; Lanusse 2004; Serrudo 2010). The term 'BIE policies' refers to a wide range of educational policies targeted at indigenous children and young people from the 1980s onwards. An example of this type of policy document research is the study of Serrudo (2010) on the legal frameworks that regulate the recruitment and training of indigenous teachers in different provinces. She scrutinized different sets of policy documents produced by the governments of the provinces of Formosa, Chaco and Salta. The author argued that each provincial state has deployed different policies towards the inclusion and training of indigenous teachers and each has a different scope, pace of implementation, and level of support. Moreover, this seems to foster different degrees of professionalization among indigenous teachers.

The great majority of the studies agree in identifying two major types of educational policies: the so called 'homogenizing' (*homogeneizadoras*) and the 'focalized' (*focalizadas*) policies (see Achilli 2001; García and Paladino 2007; Hecht 2007; Soria 2009). While, as presented in previous sections, the former misrecognizes indigenous people, the latter both recognizes but reifies socio-cultural difference. Analysts have critically examined focalized educational policies emerged during the 1990s, considering them as part of a wider process of recognition of ethnic and linguistic diversity, that, paradoxically, contributed to a non-critical celebration of cultural differences in schools, its reification, othering and decoupling from social inequalities (Bella 2007; Bordegaray and Novaro 2004; Hecht 2007; Soria 2009). Few researchers have also highlighted the negative effects the decentralisation of the education system had on the focalized policies of BIE. Despite the optimistic official rhetoric highlighting its positive effects on the appreciation of regional and local demands, decentralisation promoted greater inequalities between provinces and, in particular, weakened the poorest which were the ones with the highest numbers of indigenous people (Hetch 2006).

With regards to immigrants, only Barbero and Roldán (1987) examined the educational policies towards immigrants in the 'foundational period' of the Nation (1880-1910). They clearly demonstrated the central role of the state and the concomitant displacement of the Catholic Church from the educational policy-making process. This lack of attention to immigrants corresponds to the persistence of a 'homogenising' approach, which permeated social, cultural and educational policies directed towards this group (Domenech 2003). Unlike indigenous communities, immigrants (unless they were poor) have not become the target of specific policies that construct them as a distinctive group in need of specific educational policies.

A second strand of research within this tradition encompasses those studies which explore the ways in which educational policies targeted at indigenous people have been implemented, interpreted, and/or resisted by different actors in diverse socio-cultural and linguistic contexts (see Aguirre 2010; Arce 2007; Bertella 2006; Carozzi 1983; Cebolla de Badie 2005; Cervera *et al.* 2010; Gómez Otero 2001; Hernández and Kleinerman 1999; Lanusse 2004; Novaro 2004; Rodríguez de Anca 2004; Szulc 2009; Zidarich 2010). Analyses have been concerned with improving indigenous children's education (Acuña 2010; Hirsch 2010). Although the vast majority of such studies were produced during the 2000s, some foundational research was carried out during the 1980s, such as that by Grimsditch *et al.* (1987) which examined the aspirations and needs of indigenous and Creole women from rural areas in Formosa. This study investigated the cultural transmission model of this community and focused on what they knew, how they learnt and what they would like to learn in the future.

The great majority of these analyses are descriptive. Analyses that engage with theoretical discussions define the scope and nature of intercultural education, sometimes against other perspectives of social differences such as biculturalism and multiculturalism (Alonso and Díaz 2004b, 2004c; Arce 2007; Bertella 2006; Briones 2004; Enriz 2010; Hirsch 2010; Novaro 2004; Rodríguez de Anca 2004; Zidarich 2010). These concepts operate as an analytical yardstick against which different experiences can then be critically examined.

The methodological strategy of this research strand is mainly qualitative. Although the majority of the publications do not include detailed information about how evidence has been gathered, ethnographies of communities and schools, individual and group interviews, participant observations of training courses, documentary analysis, and participatory methods such as workshops have all been used. Few studies include references to quantitative data on BIE



experiences (see Bertella 2006; MECT 2004) and several authors make no reference to the year in which they have carried out their research.<sup>15</sup>

Research mainly gravitates around the analysis of how bilingual and intercultural educational (BIE) policies targeted at indigenous people have been implemented in different provinces, communities and schools<sup>16</sup> and how different school actors, such as policy-makers, indigenous and non-indigenous teachers, teachers' unions and indigenous communities, have interpreted them. The focus has been on 'how' these policies operate. The study of the National Ministry of Education, Culture and Technology (MECT 2004) illustrate key aspects of this approach. The document '*Sistematización de experiencias de EIB*' (MECT 2004) presented a collection of 107 narratives depicting rural and urban educational experiences, mainly from schools but also from universities, teaching training institutes, and non-governmental organisations, at the beginning of the 2000s. These experiences addressed linguistic and cultural diversity. The national government gathered this information in order to map and strengthen these experiences, disseminate their work and achievements, and identify pros and cons with the aim of developing wider national state policies. Common features across the collected experiences were identified, such as i) problems in delineating adequate pedagogic strategies in order to address inter-culturalism in schools; ii) the need to develop teachers' training material; iii) the lack of clear guidelines and/or knowledge regarding the implementation of BIE experiences in some jurisdictions; iv) serious difficulties when including families and communities; and v) school actors' lack of knowledge regarding indigenous cultures and their teaching and learning styles.

The majority of the studies highlighted obstacles, gaps and contradictions between the principles and practices of BIE, and, made (implicit or explicit) policy recommendations. For instance, research have highlighted the need: i) to develop non-indigenous teachers socio-cultural awareness of indigenous cultures across BEI experiences (Carozzi 1983; Cebolla de Badie 2005; MECT 2004); ii) to raise the status of indigenous teachers' pedagogic role in schools (Zidarich 2010); iii) to promote indigenous and non-indigenous teachers training (Cervera *et al.* 2010; MECT 2004; Serrudo 2010); iv) to develop alternative pedagogies that recognize cultural differences (Bertella 2006; Cebolla de Badie 2005; Gómez Otero 2001; MECT 2004; Novaro 2004); v) to redefine indigenous teachers' pedagogic role without restricting it to translation (Bertella 2006; Zidarich 2010); and vi) to improve indigenous teachers' working conditions in terms of salaries and job stability (Arce 2007).

Various studies also present the achievements of BIE experiences. Hirsh (2010) for instance, argued that bilingualism and interculturalism (although in different ways) have favoured school retention in one rural and one urban Guaraní communities in Salta with different levels of predominance of indigenous language. Arce (2007) claimed that BIE has promoted the participation of indigenous teachers (*Auxiliar Docente Indígena*) in their schools and communities, fostered community participation and demands, and improved indigenous teachers' working conditions and access to training.

This research tradition provides evidence that BIE policies have been developed at dissimilar rates and have implied different degrees of indigenous communities' participation (Díaz *et al.* 2010; Wallis 2010). Wallis (2010), for example, showed that the implementation of BIE in Salta has been very difficult to achieve due to its divorce from the ways in which Wichí communities' understand education and knowledge production. Moreover, the author asserts that this disconnection is also reflected in the fact that schools have misrecognized the negative impact that formal schooling has on Wichí's culture.

In sum, this research tradition examines the educational policies directed towards mainly indigenous people and has two principal strands. While the first one is focused on the analysis of policy texts, the second strand comprises the analysis of how educational policies have been implemented and how different school actors have interpreted them.

### **3.3. Language conflict and schooling**

This is a small but growing research tradition, where studies are guided by wider concerns originating from 'linguistic anthropology', 'sociolinguistics' and the 'sociology of language'. These perspectives emerged in the aftermath of World War II and have focused on language use and its implicit and complex rules rather than on its formal structuration (Unamuno 1995).

In Argentina, researchers have used a sociolinguistic perspective to study schooling from the mid-1990s onwards (see for instance Acuña 2001, 2005, 2010; Armatto de Welti 2005, 2008; Bigot 2007a, 2007b; Gandulfo 2007a, 2007b; Hecht 2006, 2010). This research tradition interprets schooling as one, albeit central, socio-linguistic scenario, where conflicts, exchanges and power relations around the use of language/s take place (Acuña 2001, 2010; Bigot 2007a). It examines different aspects of schooling such as teachers' and families' views and the linguistic aspects of educational policy *vis a vis* the socio-linguistic situation of indigenous communities and to a lesser extent, of immigrant students. According to Milstein *et al.* (2007), this research

strand interprets communicational problems of certain indigenous and poor rural pupils as part and parcel of wider conflictive relationships between diverse linguistic codes and socialisation processes. In so doing, this tradition provides evidence that, despite recent reforms towards bilingual and intercultural education, schooling remains a site of cultural and linguistic domination of indigenous people and their communities or immigrants.

The majority of these studies are interested in examining the vitality of languages and their relationships with the complex production of ethnic identities in linguistic contact zone. Only a few studies directly explore the relationships between language vitality and learning (Acuña 2001, 2010; Armatto de Welti 2005, 2008; Unamuno 1994). Some analyses focussed on the relationship between language and school failure for children living in bilingual Spanish-Guarani contexts (Gandulfo 2007a, 2007b; Armatto de Welti 2005, 2008; Unamuno 1992, 1994).

Research is mainly ethnographic. Only a few have also drawn on sociological quantitative methods such as interviews or surveys to gather information on socio-cultural and linguistic aspects (see Bigot 2007b, Unamuno 1992). Several were undertaken in rural communities in different provinces with relatively high proportions of indigenous communities, such as Salta, Corrientes, Misiones, Formosa, Neuquén and Chaco. Other analyses looked at deprived urban areas (*áreas urbano-marginales*) in the provinces of Buenos Aires and Rosario (see, for instance, Armatto de Welti 2005; Bigot 2007b; Messineo and Hecht 2007; Unamuno 1992, 1994).

Analyses mainly scrutinises indigenous people and their communities (Acuña 2001, 2005, 2010; Bigot 2007a, 2007b; Hecht 2006, 2010). Primary schooling was the main focus of attention<sup>17</sup> and research has been conducted by individual researchers and interdisciplinary teams. In general, this has been linked to the development of educational interventions such as teachers' training courses and school texts (Armatto de Welti 2008).

Unamuno's (1992) and Acuña's (2001, 2010) studies illustrate how learning and educational failure has been examined in this research tradition. Unamuno (1992) analysed the social representation of Argentina as a monolingual country which is promoted by schools receiving bilingual immigrant children from a slum in the province of Great Buenos Aires. The majority of pupils came from Paraguay and speak Guaraní and Spanish. Interviews were conducted with female and male household heads and with children attending primary schools. Unamuno argued that linguistic conflict is associated with educational failure, mainly due the asymmetrical prestige of the languages used in school and at home, rather than the communicational competence of socially excluded children. Linguistic differences were ignored

by teachers who viewed these children as '*villeros*', a person who live in a slum. Acuña (2010) argued that the educational failure of indigenous children, which surpasses that of non-indigenous people, is the result of teachers' misrecognition of the distance between their linguistic type of Spanish and the linguistic situation of indigenous pupils, which varies greatly in different regions of the country. This analysis provides evidence of how this distance is interpreted as a deficit, rather than as a linguistic difference that needs to be addressed in order to guarantee access to school knowledge.

In sum, this research tradition offers a rich perspective to unpack the relationships between language, power and schooling. Furthermore, it offers insights on the ways in which educational inequalities are produced on a daily basis in linguistic contact zones.

### **3.4. '*Difference*' and '*diversity*': *perspectives and identities***

This research tradition addresses the social construction of cultural difference in the education system. With regards to main research questions, the majority of the studies have mapped how the 'other' is viewed, produced, perceived, judged and represented at schools (see, for instance, Achilli 1996; García 2010; Sinisi 2000). Few researchers have explored how identity is produced by indigenous and non-indigenous people's silence and denial of intercultural differences (Heras Monner Sans 2002). Some examinations have scrutinised the discontinuities between the schools' and children's interpretative frameworks to unpack school failure, which has included interactional and communicational styles, use of language, learning styles and conceptions surrounding knowledge production (Borton *et al.* 2010; Borzone and Rosemberg 2000; Cardin 2003; Novaro *et al.* 2008).

Teachers' perspectives have often been the focus of attention (for example, Montesinos and Pallma 1999; Montesinos *et al.* 1999; Sinisi 1999). Some studies also examine the views of parents, teaching students, indigenous leaders, and professionals from interdisciplinary teams working in schools (see Heras Monner Sans 2002; Holstein 1999; Margulis and Lewin 1999; Novaro *et al.* 2008; Pérez 2008; Sagastizabal 2006). Few researchers have focussed on pupils' perspectives (Holstein 1999) and many contrast the views of different school actors (Borton *et al.* 2010; Domenech 2004; Neufeld and Thisted 1999; Pérez 2008; Sagastizabal 2006). Social discourses such as the official curricula (Bigot 2010; Heras Monner Sans 2002; Montesinos *et al.* 1999), national and international legal frameworks (such as national laws and the National Constitution, and resolutions of international non-governmental organisations such as United

Nations) (Bigot 2010; Martínez 2008), and newspaper articles (Bigot 2010; Montesinos *et al.* 1999) have been scrutinised.

In relation to the ethnic groups examined, several studies have focussed on the production of cultural difference of discrete ethnic groups: indigenous people (Bigot 2010; García 2010; Soria 2010) or immigrants (Castiglione 2007; Crosa Pottilli *et al.* 2009; Ghiglini and Lorenzo 1999; Margulis and Lewin 1999; Malegaríe 2009). However, other researchers have examined how different minority groups are 'othering' in schools, such as immigrants, mainly from other Latin American countries and their descendants; national migrants; indigenous groups; and poor people (Domenech 2004; Feldsberg 2004; Holstein 1999; Montesinos 2005; Neufeld and Thisted 1999; Sagastizabal 2006; Sinisi 1999, 2000). According to these authors, rather than compartments, these groups need to be interpreted as social positions that can be occupied simultaneously, as in the case of poor immigrant children. Authors have argued that despite particularities, these diverse groups are construed as 'different', inferior and subordinate by the daily, mainly unconscious deployment of symbolic and material practices of 'othering'<sup>18</sup>. Only a few studies compare the situation of immigrants and indigenous pupils in schools (see Domenech 2004; Novaro *et al.* 2008).

Participant observations, interviews of different types, and document analysis have been the main research techniques for this tradition. Some researchers have deployed participatory methods of data collection and analysis (Heras and Holstein 2004; Sagastizabal 2000) and have argued that researchers and research participants have co-produced knowledge together. Numerous researchers have developed theoretical tools, diagnoses and pedagogic interventions, in order to address the complexity of diversity (Achilli 1996; Heras and Holstein 2004). The great majority of the analyses focussed on state primary schools (see Borton *et al.* 2010; Feldsberg 2004; Novaro 2009; Pérez 2008; Sagastizabal 2006).

Analyses, although from different theoretical standpoints, have argued that representations and practices surrounding socio-cultural diversity and difference in schools are not produced in a vacuum. They are part and parcel of wider 'symbolic and material configurations' (Montesinos and Pallma 1999), 'socio-cultural matrixes' (Achilli 1996), socio-cultural fields (Margulis and Lewin 1999), and intercultural relationships (Heras and Holstein 2004; Neufeld and Thisted 1999). From this perspective, schools are unique sites for understanding and challenging discrimination, racism, and stigmatisation of minority groups, including immigrants and indigenous people. These examinations interpret schools as a cultural

sub-field with relative autonomy. Exploring connections and differences between school actors' perspectives and practices, and other discursive and social arenas, together with enlightening the particularities of the former, has been a central task of this research strand.

In this research tradition, numerous studies have examined the processes of inferiorisation, stigmatisation and discrimination of immigrant and/or indigenous children from a constructivist perspective, recognising their historical, situated and relational nature. Different theoretical perspectives and concepts have been deployed. Several researchers labelled the objects of their study as 'perspectives', 'images', 'prejudices', 'beliefs', 'ideas', 'judgments' and/or 'representations', without making explicit their theoretical grounds (see Pérez 2008; Sagastizabal 2006). In many cases, definitions of these terms are lacking.

One particular rich group of studies use the concept of 'social representation' to explore school actors' perspectives and views (see Borton *et al.* 2010; Crosa Pottilli *et al.* 2009; Malegarie 2009; Neufeld and Thisted 1999). Although there are theoretical nuances amongst these analyses, this concept refers to social actors' interpretative templates and their practical knowledge. Sociological and anthropological studies have also used it. Among the former, Crosa Pottilli *et al.* (2009) compared primary and secondary school teachers and young people's discriminatory social representations of immigrants (*extranjeros*). Researchers performed semi-structured and in-depth interviews, and held focus groups with teachers and young people aged 18 to 30 from 2001-2008 in the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires. The authors argued that teachers' and young peoples' social representations concerning a selection of nations including Bolivia, Peru, Chile, Germany, Ukraine, Italy, Korean and Spain, are extrapolated to their nationals. In this manner, research participants associated 'rich nations' with 'desirable people', and 'poor nations' with 'unwanted people' (Crosa Pottilli *et al.* 2009). The authors assumed that this hierarchy permeates people's actions and strategies, which in turn contributes to the legitimation of the 'hegemonic moral code'.

Other analysts have engaged with the concepts of racism and neo-racism as defined by Balibar, Menéndez and/or Wieviorka (see for example Bigot 2010; Crosa Pottilli *et al.* 2009; Margulis and Lewin 1999). During the 1990s, these studies found similar social and cultural trends regarding immigration. Comparable to the situation in Europe, a 'racism of crisis' emerged which was accompanied by an active search for a scapegoat to be identified and blamed for social problems such as unemployment and poverty. Immigrants became visible social categories that were expected to assume negative behaviours and features. This 'new racism' refers to a

new type of discrimination based on the cultural traits of a group, such as language, religion, traditions and habits, rather than on biological differences. This requires that the 'other' be rejected due to its values and culture. Bigot (2010), for instance, compared current international and national legal frameworks against discrimination with how Toba people from the community Los Pumitas in Rosario city experience racism. Following Wieviorka, Bigot argued that her concept of 'indigenous discrimination', defined as attitudes, discourses and practices that suppose mistreatment of people for belonging to indigenous groups, is a form of neo-racism, which is denounced by indigenous leaders as the key reason for their children's educational failure. Another illustration of this type of research is Margulis' and Lewin's (1999) study. They described in their study how i) racism and discrimination take place in schools and in the school system, and ii) the school and its actors contribute to or mitigate discrimination against immigrants. These studies offer evidence of schools, teachers' and children's racist practices. Similarly to numerous other studies, this analysis showed how teachers establish a hierarchy amongst different ethnic groups, locating at its top those that are 'like us', the 'normal', and classifying immigrant children and families according to racist and ethnocentric values.

Drawing heuristic tools mainly from anthropology but also sociology, it mainly investigates how representations and practices around 'difference' and 'diversity' contribute to the production of social inequalities of various social groups. This tradition traces how 'difference' is produced and defined, and how it is intertwined with identity making processes.

### ***3.5. School texts as a means of 'othering'***

This research tradition contributes to exploring the ways in which school textbooks and handbooks (*textos* and *manuales escolares*) have defined cultural difference in Argentina. The majority of the studies have analysed how indigenous people have been discursively produced in school textbooks (Artieda 2002, 2005, 2006; Artieda *et al.* 2009; Nicoletti 2006; Novaro 2003). Several analyses have looked at the portrayal of immigrants (Alloatti 2008; Devoto 1993; Zelaya de Nader and Suayter de Iñigo 1990) and a few have focused their attention on how the image of Argentina and its national identity has been produced by defining different types of outsiders or 'others' (Cucuzza 2007; Romero 2004). Although several studies were carried out in the 1980s, the majority of these analyses were performed during the last decade.

Primary and basic education has been the main focus of analysis (Alloatti 2008; Artieda 2002, 2005; Artieda *et al.* 2009; Novaro 2003; Zelaya de Nader and Suayter de Iñigo 1990), with

just a few examining secondary education (Devoto 1993; Romero 2004). Only a minority have looked at other types of educational texts, such as curriculum documents, school notebooks and educational policies (Díaz and Rodríguez de Anca 2004; Fischman 1993; Montesinos 2005). Few researchers have examined texts alongside other data sources such as interviews (Artieda *et al.* 2009; Novaro 2003).

Researchers have examined textbooks edited by a diverse range of institutions, such as the national government up to the decentralisation of primary education in the late 1970s and secondary schooling in the early 1990s, provincial governments following the abandonment of the role by the central government, the Catholic church in the origins of the nation-state and in specific regions of the country, private publishing companies and non-governmental organisations, and individual schools following the educational reform of the 1990s and the concomitant proliferation of different school text producers.

Although this body of research looks at different periods of Argentinean history, the great majority of the analyses have examined textbooks during the emergence and consolidation of the National Education System,<sup>19</sup> whether as a stand-alone period or from a comparative perspective. Many researchers have adopted a historical perspective and have traced continuities and discontinuities between different periods. In general, the so called ‘foundational period’, which we have referred to as the early period of the hegemony of the cultural homogenisation, has been taken as the baseline (Novaro 2003; Romero 2004). Artieda (2007) and Artieda and colleagues (2009), for instance, compared the symbolic construction of the relationships between ethnic groups in this ‘foundational period’ with other crucial historical moments, such as Peronism, the last military dictatorship, and the 1980s onwards with the return of democracy and the discursive dominance of ‘cultural diversity’ and multiculturalism.

School texts have been interpreted as ‘discourses’ (Artieda 2005, 2006, 2007), ‘devices’ (Nicoletti 2006), ‘state’s representations’ (Nicoletti 2002/2003), ‘means of formal socialisation’ or ‘ideological containers’ (Zelaya de Nader and Suayter de Iñigo 1990), ‘curriculum in act’ (Romero 2004), and ‘means for subjectivity production’ (Artieda and Rosso 2009). Despite the theoretical nuances, this research body assumes that textbooks are part and parcel of wider social representations which are enmeshed in particular social, economic, cultural and political contexts. Moreover, these analyses assume that textbooks are important tools to produce legitimate meanings and representations of the past and present. Via this view, school discourses play a key role in the production and reproduction of socio-political and symbolic domination of



indigenous people and/or immigrants. Their findings point to striking continuities between the 'foundational period' up to the late 1970s and the coexistence of contradictory discourses around cultural difference from the 1980s onwards, a mixture of cultural 'sediments' and new and emerging ways to define difference.

Artieda (2006), who is one of the most prolific authors in this tradition, illustrates this tradition. She examined basic education school texts from two periods: the last military dictatorship (1976-83) and from the return of the democracy (1983) onwards. With regards to the last dictatorship, the author identified the emergence of a religious and moral discourse, which was utilised to explain the relationship between indigenous people and 'society'. While the role of the state in the 'homogenisation' of indigenous communities is misrecognised, their evangelisation is highlighted. Following the return of democracy, these discourses disappeared from school texts. Narratives concerned with the evangelisation of indigenous people were displaced by the centrality of the past and present role of the state. Unlike the school texts of the dictatorship, school texts used in democratic times have started to explore the asymmetrical relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous people, as well as the history of their suffering and oppression.

In sum, this research tradition has identified different ways of 'othering' indigenous people and immigrants by: i) making them invisible, ii) asserting the qualities of 'being Argentinean' and demarcating its virtues, qualities and common history and future, iii) 'othering' those who did not comply with these criteria, and iv) recognising and celebrating cultural difference, although on many occasions in contradictory ways. These discursive identity-making mechanisms have had a different centrality over time. While the production of a white Argentinean masculine nation and the parallel 'othering' of indigenous people and/or immigrants was dominant up until the end of the 1970s, the recognition of cultural difference, in particular in the case of indigenous people, together with the persistence of essentialist, apolitical and ahistorical perspectives was a feature of the period which began in the 1980s with the return of the democracy and the introduction of a multicultural educational agenda. To date, there are no studies examining school texts in the period initiated by the new national law in 2006.

#### **4. Discussion and final remarks**

This article presented five research traditions: 'Mapping educational access', 'Intercultural educational policies', 'Language conflict and schooling', 'Difference and diversity', and 'School

texts as a means of othering'. They have unpacked ethnic and educational inequalities during the period 1980-2010. This piece offered a systematic analysis of their key themes, conceptual approaches and findings. This mapping was the result of multi-layered searching strategies that we deployed to unearth what has been misrecognized by local literature reviews in the field of educational research.

Despite their particularities, this paper showed that research traditions share a common interpretative matrix to unpack key aspects of the relationships between ethnic groups and education. On the one hand, they all agreed in identifying a dominant homogenizing paradigm in education since the inception of the Argentinean Nation State and the early 1980s. This paradigm involved a cultural assimilation approach and implied the denial and marginalization of cultural and linguist differences of a variety of immigrant and indigenous groups. On the other hand, from the 1980s onwards, researchers coincided in recognizing a new period where key educational policies revolved around cultural differences and diversity. Moreover, this article examined how these research traditions have critically examined different aspects of both periods. All of them evidenced both continuity with and break from previous essentialist and a-historical conceptions about cultural difference. They offer clues about how social, policy and educational discourses contribute to disadvantage some minority ethnic groups' educational experiences and schooling.

This paper evidenced that few researchers asked questions about ethnic and educational inequalities during the 1980s. The 1990s witnessed a considerable increase and from 2000s onwards these different research strands have blossomed. This growth reflects the centrality that cultural difference, diversity and multiculturalism have had in shaping the cultural and educational agenda (both at policy and school levels). State educational policies have been strongly influenced what has been researched. In particular, the emergence of national, provincial and local Bilingual and Intercultural Education initiatives have configured a fertile ground for researchers to look at. Educational anthropology has had a significant influence in the development of this research field. Unlike other national research traditions, sociologists of education have played a marginal role in asking difficult questions about ethnicity and compulsory schooling.

The majority of the research traditions have predominantly looked at indigenous people and their educational experiences. The 'intercultural educational policies' tradition, for instance, have focused on how BIE policies largely targeted at indigenous pupils have been interpreted by

different policy and social actors. The 'school text tradition', on the other hand, has unfolded how school texts portray mainly indigenous communities in different historical periods. The quantitative research tradition has also mainly looked at indigenous groups. The exceptions are the 'socio-cultural tradition' and the 'socio-linguistic' one, which looks at both immigrants and indigenous people.

We demonstrated that qualitative research is dominant in the majority of the research traditions. Policy making, teachers' and students views, language conflict, and discursive production of cultural difference have been scrutinized using interviews of different types, participant observations, ethnographies, and document and discourse analysis. The views and perspectives of school actors (mainly teachers) have been at the center of attention. Only few analyses have examined children's and young people's voices. Only one tradition revolves around quantitative research methods. This set of research largely uses secondary data sources. Up to the 2000s, statistical information about indigenous pupils at national level was inexistent. This seems to explain the recent (although slow) increase of this research tradition. On the other hand, despite the availability of general educational information about immigrants, educational researchers have tended – with few exceptions- to overlook the use of secondary data sources to examine the levels of educational participation of different immigrant groups.

Moreover, this mapping exercise showed that several research traditions unpack how certain aspects of (largely primary) schooling operate to discriminate certain groups of students. The 'school text' and the 'difference and diversity'<sup>20</sup> traditions investigate how different types of discourses contribute to the 'othering' of certain minority ethnic groups. The 'socio-linguistic' tradition focuses on how language conflict is linked to the production or dissolution of ethnic identities and, in some cases, to learning. 'Intercultural educational policies' studies look at how BIE has been interpreted by policy texts and by different school and non-school actors (in particular, teachers). They show that is necessary to look at local contexts to recognize the diversity of BIE policies. Moreover, researchers identified different types of challenges that these initiatives imply for the provincial education system and the schools. The nature, scope and challenges of indigenous teachers have been at the center of attention.

Research addressing the social construction of cultural difference in the education system is by far the strongest research tradition in Argentina within the field of ethnicity/race inequalities in education. Around 40% of the publications included in our database were clustered in this tradition. Research on BIE policies is a growing and promising field, although in

general it has not yet taken full advantage of all the conceptual frameworks involved in policy studies. The 'school text' and the 'sociolinguistic' traditions are made up by fewer publications. However, they have clearer research questions, designs and conceptual frameworks than other traditions. Finally, as we pointed out earlier, quantitative approaches examining immigrants and indigenous education, is the smallest tradition in number and a slowly emerging field of study.

Charting this complex territory allows us identifying some challenges and potential areas for further research and collaboration. First, the new educational policy scenario, with its combination of universal and focalized policy approaches targeted at indigenous people, together with the raise of the school leaving age, configure new challenges. The majority of the reviewed studies examined ethnic and educational inequalities up to the new Education Law 2006. The new social, economic and educational scenario will demand to both revisit 'old issues' and formulate new research questions. For instance, studies would need to pay more attention to how the new BIE type of education is being implemented. Moreover, future research would benefit by examining indigenous and immigrants' experiences at secondary schooling. Second, research traditions could benefit from engaging with wider sociological concerns around gender, social class and ethnicity. In particular, looking at how schools promote the inclusion or exclusion of ethnic minority groups with different levels of economic, social, cultural and linguistic capital would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the production of, reproduction and challenge to educational inequalities. Although Argentinean research strands offer significant clues, they have not yet engaged with sociological theories that may contribute to enrich current understandings. In particular, whiteness studies could offer a fruitful lens to unpack racism in the education system. Third, it would be fruitful if future studies unpack the reasons behind educational failure of indigenous and immigrant students. Available quantitative data sources have impeded this type of approach. However, qualitative approaches could offer a rich understanding of some minority ethnic students' educational engagement. Studies within the socio-linguistic tradition are already working in this direction. Fourth, it would be valuable if future research examines children's and young people's views and perspectives would also make a rich contribution. Educational anthropologists have started to do so (although not yet to unpack ethnic and educational inequalities). Fifth, studies would be benefit from making visible the role that researchers' relationships with research subjects have in the production of knowledge. With some exceptions, this issue has been overlooked. Sixth, it seems that more attention should be paid to the schooling of immigrant students. Some studies have mainly focused on border countries immigrants, misrecognizing national groups such as the Peruvians

and Koreans. Finally, future research needs to reflect on the power of academic knowledge to reify socio-cultural differences, and of the risk of imposing its categorizations on the phenomena under study. In this sense, the promotion of collective and individual reflexive accounts on how we produce knowledge on ethnic and educational inequalities is paramount.

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<sup>2</sup> The current structure of the national education system consists of four levels (early childhood education, primary, secondary, higher education) and eight 'types' (*modalidades*) amongst which is the Intercultural and Bilingual Education (Education Law 26.206: Art. 17).

<sup>3</sup> Primary schooling has been compulsory since 1884 (Law 1420), whilst lower secondary schooling and the last school year of kindergarten school became compulsory in 1993 (Federal Law of Education 24.195). The new Education Law 26.206 passed in 2006, increased the school leaving age by making upper secondary education compulsory.

<sup>4</sup> Only in the XIX century immigration started to be systematically recorded (Devoto 2003).

<sup>5</sup> For information about the past of indigenous communities see *Gobierno de la República Argentina* (2011).

<sup>6</sup> The only survey that previously gathered information at a national level on indigenous people was the National Indigenous Census in 1965-1968.

<sup>7</sup> In primary schooling, the general repetition rate is 5.18% and the dropout rate is 1.16%.

<sup>8</sup> For the period 2008-2009, the general repetition rate at secondary schooling was 12.18% for the Basic cycle and 7.73% for the Oriented one (Alonso *et al.* 2011).

<sup>9</sup> This Law re-structured the organization and governance of the national education system (whose pillars were established in 1884 by the Law 1420).

<sup>10</sup> Studies on socio-economic inequalities and schools' daily lives in changing contexts have been at the center of the interest of sociology of education.

<sup>11</sup> At the beginning of the study, we also searched for key words (such as education, school, inequality, race, ethnicity and Argentina) in international databases such as Sociological Abstracts, ERIC, and Web of Knowledge. However, as expected, these catalogues of mainly English speaking academic journals did not contain any relevant articles.

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<sup>12</sup> In some cases, it was not possible to check the complete collection.

<sup>13</sup> The report of Cerrutti (2009) is a general characterization of the immigrant population. Only selected sections are focused on the educational situation of this population.

<sup>14</sup> This study analysed data from the ECPI.

<sup>15</sup> The lack of detailed methodological information is more common in chapters of books. The wider target audience could explain this tendency.

<sup>16</sup> Only one study (Citrinovitz 1991) examined educational policies targeted (bilingual literacy) at immigrants in frontier schools in order to determine the reasons behind their educational failure.

<sup>17</sup> Only Armatto de Welti (2008) studies kindergarten schooling.

<sup>18</sup> Some authors have also compared the situation of these groups with that of special education needs pupils: Sinisi (1999); Skliar (2005); Padawer *et al.* (2010).

<sup>19</sup> Alloatti (2008) argued that during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, primary education school texts started to be published in Argentina. School textbooks and school acts were crucial aspects in the production of a 'national identity'.