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Something old, something new. Educational inclusion and head teachers as policy actors and subjects in the City of Buenos Aires

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Something old, something new. Educational inclusion and head teachers as policy actors and subjects in the City of Buenos Aires

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In Argentina, 'inclusion' has become a central target of national and provincial educational policy since the mid-2000s. Unlike in other countries, inclusion has been associated with the transformation of upper secondary schooling into a compulsory level of education, together with the effective integration of pupils from socio-economically deprived families. This article examines how policy on inclusion is 'done by' and 'done to' head teachers in two *Escuelas de Reingreso* (Returning Schools) in the City of Buenos Aires. It scrutinises the usefulness of Ball and colleagues' approach to policy in a very different context from their own. It argues that the head teachers are both policy actors and subjects. As policy actors, they creatively interpret and translate their schools' policy mandates within specific contexts. In so doing, they produce antagonistic versions of 'inclusion': the 'educational' and 'socio-educational' approaches. As policy subjects, they are spoken by competing policy discourses (in a Foucaultian sense) on schooling: the 'selection and homogenisation' and the 'inclusion and personalisation' discourses. They demarcate the limits to which head teachers are able to imagine, think and do. In different ways, they contribute to the misrecognition of the centrality of teachers' views and practices in pupils' learning.

Keywords: policy; policy subject; policy actor; head teachers; City of Buenos Aires

1. Introduction

'Inclusion' has become a buzzword in international, regional and national educational policy agendas. During the last three decades, academic research on 'inclusive education' and inclusive educational policies has rapidly grown in Europe, North America, Australasia and Latin America (Armstrong, Armstrong, and Spandagou 2011; Slee 2011). Different analyses have shown how it has been redefined and re-contextualised in different regions and national contexts (Amadio 2009; Rambla et al. 2008).

In Argentina, 'inclusion' has become a central target of national and provincial policy since the early 2000s (Filmus and Kaplan 2012; Perazza and Terigi 2010; Terigi 2009). Unlike in other countries, 'inclusion' has been associated with the transformation of upper secondary schooling into a compulsory level of education, together with the effective school integration of pupils from socio-economically

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deprived families (Duro and Perazza n.d.). A variety of policy texts (such as federal, national and provincial laws and resolutions), policy technologies and dispositif (Bailey 2013) in Foucault's sense (such as socio-educational programmes, new types of schools and ways to deal with misbehaviour) and material resources (for instance, an increase in the national educational budget) have been deployed in an attempt to transform the so-called 'traditional' meritocratic and socially selective secondary schooling into an 'inclusive' ethos. This meritocratic schooling emerged at the end of the nineteenth century and has upheld the use of normalizing, classificatory and selective pedagogic devices – such as exams, regulations around attendance and discipline, and styles of relationships between teachers and students (Tenti Fanfani 2002).

Despite these changes in the policy scenario, there are persistent difficulties in effectively including young people in secondary schooling. Research shows that the increase in the number of students has been accompanied by persistent levels of repetition, over-age (*sobreedad*),[1] drop out and low educational achievement measured by different international and national standardised assessments (Ministerio de Educación 2010; Rivas, Vera, and Bezem 2012; SITEAL 2012). These average indicators hide significant differences amongst provinces and regions, circuits of schooling and socio-economic groups (Ministerio de Educación 2010; SITEAL 2012). Similar trends (with the exception of a decrease in the number of students) are present in the City of Buenos Aires, the richest jurisdiction in the country. During the last decade, the city has had relatively high levels of secondary school net enrolment (93.9% in 2002 and 94.1% in 2010) but persistent levels of intra-annual drop out (around 9–11%), together with an increase in repetitions (47.3% in 1998 and 48.0% in 2010) and *sobreedad* rates (14% in 1998 and 19.7% in 2010) (GCBA 2011; Montes and Ziegler 2012). Between 2002 and 2010, around 9000 students dropped out during the school year (GCBA 2011). Studies also show stable differences in these indicators amongst school districts[2] and types of state secondary schools[3] (GCBA 2011; Southwell 2011a). Moreover, research indicates staggering differences between the educational trajectories of students from different socio-economic backgrounds.[4]

The difficulties in accomplishing 'inclusion' have triggered controversies and disputes amongst policy-makers, teachers unions, teachers and academics around the reasons for their persistence, the meanings of 'inclusion' and the ways in which it should be achieved (Montesinos, Schoo, and Sinisi 2009; Southwell 2011b; Terigi 2012). While some have argued that secondary schooling needs to integrate new organisational and pedagogic elements to be 'inclusive', others have asserted that only a radical transformation of 'the grammar of schooling' could achieve that goal (Terigi 2012).

This article looks at how 'inclusion' policy is done by and done to head teachers in two *Escuelas de Reingreso* (from now onwards, Returning Schools – RS) in the City of Buenos Aires. RS aim to guarantee the return, attendance and graduation of young people who, for different reasons, had dropped out for, at least, one school year. Six RS were created in 2004 and two more in 2006 as part of a wider local inclusive policy strategy to comply with the educational provincial Law 898, which established the compulsory nature of secondary schooling in 2002.[5] At the time of their creation, these schools were an 'experimental' policy priority: they had their own school inspector, specific technical assistance, higher funding per student and professional support and training. RS were seen by local educational authorities as an opportunity to assess the effects of transforming key aspects of 'traditional'

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secondary schooling on educational engagement and, at the same time, to evaluate if these changes could be extended to the local education system (Maddonni 2014). In 2010, these schools had 2% of the local school population in common secondary education (*nivel medio de educación común*) (GCBA 2011).

This paper argues, in line with recent British research, that the head teachers of the RS schools 'A' (Marta) and 'B' (Roberto) are both policy actors and policy subjects (Ball 1993; Ball et al. 2011b). As 'policy actors', they creatively interpret and translate their schools' policy mandates within specific contexts. In so doing, they produce antagonistic versions of 'inclusion': what I call the 'educational' and 'socio-educational' approaches. As policy subjects, however, they interpret and translate policies in discursive circumstances and within specific discursive boundaries 'that they cannot, or perhaps do not, think about' (Ball 1993, 15). In other words, head teachers are caught by competing policy discourses (in a Foucaultian sense) on schooling: what I call the 'selection and homogenisation' and the 'inclusive and personalizing' discourses. These discourses demarcate limits to what head teachers are able to imagine, think and do, and, in different ways, contribute to the misrecognition of the centrality of teachers' views and practices in pupils' learning.

Following Ball and his colleagues (Ball et al. 2011a, 2011b; Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012; Ball and Maroy 2009; Braun et al. 2011), this piece scrutinises the complexity and multilayered nature of the policy process by looking at educational policy as text, enactment and discourse in the Argentinean context. It teases out the usefulness of Ball and colleagues' conceptual tools to unpack the policy process in a very different scenario from theirs. In so doing, it offers evidence of the crucial role of head teachers in policy-making as well as of the limits of their creative and sophisticated policy translations. Finally, it scrutinises aspects of the policy process that have been overlooked in Argentinean policy research.

This paper is organised into five main sections. The next one briefly reviews Argentinean studies on head teachers' role in secondary schools and policy studies on 'inclusion' that have looked at them. Then, the central tenets of the policy process perspective used in my analysis are unfolded. Third, the goals and organisation of the RS and the key features of the study are depicted. Fourth, I examine how 'inclusion' policy is done by and to head teachers. To do so, I unpack RS policy mandates, head teachers' policy, conflicting interpretations of a 'proper school' and how these are entangled with wider competing contemporary educational policy discourses and their own limits and contradictions.

2. Head teachers in state secondary schools and policy studies on 'inclusion'

From the 1990s onwards, different national and provincial educational reforms have attempted to transform the role of head teachers from executors of policies defined 'above them' (whether by national before the 1990s or provincial educational authorities afterwards) to 'successful leaders' who are able to negotiate different demands from central and local authorities, their schools teachers, students and families and other social organisations (Bocchio and Lamfri 2013; Grinberg 2006; Manzione 2011; Saforcada 2008). Since the 1990s, a variety of policy texts and technologies have delineated a new vocabulary related to the management of schools, such as 'school management' (instead of 'school administration'), 'professionalization' and 'school leadership'. These terms reflect different policy attempts to transform the historic hierarchical and bureaucratic organisation of the state

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educational system and to produce schools as more autonomous entities wherein head teachers have a higher degree of manoeuvre when dealing with administrative, pedagogic and school community matters (Gorostiaga 2007; Grinberg 2006; Manzione 2011).

During the last three decades, it is possible to identify three main types of literature on head teachers' role in secondary schooling. First, there has been a steady increase in the school management (*gestión escolar*) literature that has offered a variety of policy strategies aligned with policy intentions to redefine head teachers' historic role (Frigerio and Poggi 1992; Poggi 2001). This normative literature presents head teachers as crucial actors in the achievement of educational quality and inclusion at school level. Second, several studies have looked at how head teachers deal with the everyday running of their schools. A group of them offers comparative analyses on schools' institutional management (*gestión institucional*) and stresses the existence of variety of leadership styles (Duschatzky and Birgin 2001; Ferrata et al. 2005; Sendón 2007a, 2007b; Vicente 2013). Other researchers have focused on head teachers from a policy perspective. On the one hand, few have examined different national and provincial policy texts (such as *Estatutos Docentes Provinciales* – Provincial Statutory Guidance on School Teacher's Pay and Conditions) regulating head teachers' role and recruitment policies in different periods (Aguerrondo, Lugo, and Schurmann 2011; Mezzadra and Bilbao 2011). They identify the persistence of some historical and traditional traits in the official definitions of head teachers' role and recruitment requirements,[6] which are all associated with the survival of bureaucratic aspects in the organisation of state schools. Amongst these continuities, authors mention the lack of centrality of non-teaching expertise or knowledge on schools' communities to formally fulfil this role; the lack of accountability of head teachers with regard to their school's educational results; and the relative low level of administrative autonomy. On the other hand, several analyses have looked at head teachers and 'inclusion' policies. First, few researchers examine how policy discourses in the 1990s and 2000s have redefined head teachers' roles (Grinberg 2006; Manzione 2011). Based on the analysis of policy texts, these authors argue that the neoliberal educational reforms of the 1990s demanded new organisational and managerial styles and redefined head teachers' role as flexible 'leaders' who should forge local-based initiatives. Manzione (2011) also asserts that – during the anti-neo-liberal Kirchnerist era[7] – there has been a shift in the official definition of head teachers' role in schools dealing with poor young people: current educational policy refers to them as 'risk managers', rather than as 'managers of intelligent institutions'. Second, policy examinations shed light on head teachers' interpretations of policy initiatives (such as national or provincial social and educational policy programmes) (such as Gluz 2006; Gluz and Moyano 2013; Jacinto and Freytes Frey 2004; Montesinos, Schoo, and Sinisi 2009; Tenti Fanfani, Frederic, and Steinberg 2009). Rather than being the main focus of these analyses, head teachers' perspectives are presented alongside those of teachers and sometimes students. These qualitative studies examine if policy actors' interpretations differ, agree, resist or resignify policy programmes at school level. While some studies identify variations of interpretations across different type of schools, others highlight continuities.[8] Rather than contradictory results, these analyses reflect dissimilar theoretical understandings of the explanatory power of the school level. Finally, few studies have looked at

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head teachers' views in non-traditional secondary schools such as the RS (see Krichesky et al. 2007; Maddonni 2014). Here again, head teachers' perspectives have been explored alongside other school actors. Analyses are brief and they tend to revolve around their views on the RS academic and social organisation, students' socio-educational trajectories and their professional challenges (in particular when examining the foundational period of the RS) (Krichesky et al. 2007).

Summing up, analyses of head teachers' policy role in state secondary schools depict a hybrid scenario. On the one hand, schools and head teachers have been bombarded by national and local policy demands, such as national and provincial policy mandates to lead the elaboration, implementation and assessment of school-based projects – including what the City of Buenos Aires' currently call 'the School Project' (*Proyecto Escuela*) – demanding certain levels of school autonomy and responsibility. On the other hand, the persistence of some bureaucratic traits of head teachers' recruitment and professional career in state schools have imposed limits to the transformation of their role, and to school-based change.

My study contributes to this body of research by examining how policy is done by and to head teachers using Ball and his colleagues' perspectives on the policy process. In this way, it examines the usefulness of their conceptual toolbox to unpack the articulation of the macro, meso and micro levels of analysis in a historical, political and institutional context very different from the English one. Furthermore, it focuses on a substantive research area that has been marginally addressed by Argentinean researchers and overlooked by Ball's studies (Gunter 2013).

After presenting the contributions of this study, the next section sketches out the principal elements of the conceptual approach of my analysis.

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3. Policy as text, enactment and discourse

According to Ball and his colleagues (Ball 1993; Ball et al. 2011a; Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012; Braun et al. 2011), policy should be understood as text, as enactment and as discourse. In their view, studying policy demands to look at these different levels of analysis and at their complex, dynamic and historical articulations in particular contexts.

Conceptualising policy as 'text' implies interpreting policy as 'textual interventions', as multifaceted codifications produced via compromises, struggles, 'authoritative public interpretations and reinterpretations' (Ball 1993, 11). Policy texts 'represent the outcome of political struggles over meaning' (Braun et al. 2011). They are the 'official discourse of the state' (Codd 1988). Moreover, policy texts 'seek to frame, constitute and change educational practices' (Lingard and Ozga 2007, 2). Policies 'create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do is narrowed or changed, or particular goals or outcomes are set' (Ball 1993, 19). Rather than proposing clear courses of actions, educational policies create problems for schools and school actors.

Understanding policy as text also draws our attention to the ways in which these texts are 'decoded', interpreted and read by policy actors (such as head teachers, teachers and students) (Ball 1993). The concept 'policy enactment' refers to actors' interpretations of policy texts, which are forged 'in relation to their history, experiences, skills, resources and context' (Ball 1993, 11). From this perspective, school actors 'do' policies. They resignify and recontextualise policy texts in relation to their own professional biographies; their school's historical, institutional and social context; and their

location within the local education system (Braun et al. 2011). Policy interpretation is a creative, reflexive and situated translation process. Policy translation is an intersubjective and sophisticated endeavour performed by policy actors every day.

However, policy actors 'do policy' within historic and moving discursive boundaries, within which they could interpret and read educational policy. Policy translations take place within Discourse with a capital 'd' (in Foucault's terms), within discursive formations. Nonetheless they are neither coherent nor homogeneous. They encompass a variety of general and specific discourses, voids, gaps, silences and tensions (Ball 1993; Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012). Understanding policy as discourse demands that we look at policy (policy collections or ensembles) and how it 'exercises power through the production of "truth", and "knowledge", as discourses' (Ball 1993, 14). Discourse is made up by variety of contributing discourses, which are clusters of educational policies around key aspects of schooling such as behaviour, learning and the construction of the teacher, the student and the school (Maguire et al. 2011). Discourses have materiality and could be traced in artefacts and policy technologies, subjects and subjectivities. Discourse defines what is thinkable, desirable and legitimate; and in so doing, signals what is mad, deviant and improper (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012; Maguire et al. 2011). As Ball (1993) puts it: 'discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority' (14). In this sense, examining policy as discourse also requires us to pay attention to what policy actors 'do not think about' and what they cannot imagine, say or do.

After presenting the conceptual toolkit of this analysis, the next section introduces the RS, the studied schools and the methodological strategy of my research.

4. RS, the cases and this study

Previous studies depict head teachers, teachers' and students' positive views about the RS' academic and social organisation (Baquero et al. 2009; Krichesky et al. 2007; Tiramonti et al. 2007). Research shows that, unlike in their previous schools, RS students feel recognised and valued by adults at their schools (Maddonni 2014; Tiramonti et al. 2007). Analyses demonstrate that RS have brought about substantial changes to central aspects of the 'traditional academic regime' of secondary schooling (Baquero et al. 2009). According to some analysts, however, the existence of the RS reflect wider processes of socio-educational segregation which implies that different groups of schools gather particular socio-economic intakes, offer unequal schooling experiences and foster diverse teacher identities, expectations and ways of working (Tiramonti 2011a). In this view, despite the original policy intentions, the RS have not had wider effects in the local education system.

Six RS were created in 2004 and two RS in 2006 in the City of Buenos Aires as part of a wider local inclusive policy strategy to comply with the Law 898 that established the compulsory nature of secondary schooling in 2002. Unlike the time when they were created, nowadays the current Ministry of Education of the City lacks interest in publicising and supporting the RS.[9]

These schools have different ways to support pupils' educational trajectories. First, RS pupils receive a bursary.[10] Second, RS organise time and space in different ways than 'traditional' secondary schools. For example, rather than being academically and socially structured around form groups attending different school years, RS are organised around individuals' educational trajectories. In these institutions,

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students could potentially follow their own pace to fulfil the school's academic requirements. Students could re-sit a module as many times as they need. Unlike mainstream secondary schooling, there is no repetition of a school year. Despite this, the educational certificate given by RS to pupils are of equal formal value of that of any secondary school.

The school curriculum is shorter than that of ordinary secondary schools and is split into compulsory modules and optional workshops. The former are structured around basic contents common to those delivered by mainstream secondary schools. The latter varies according to the school and attempt to promote aesthetic and expressive interests. Only around a third of the teachers at RS get paid for devoting time to lesson planning and extra-classroom educational support for students.[11] Teachers had high levels of professional autonomy and systematic assessment mechanisms of their pedagogic strategies and effectiveness were absent.[12] All RS have pedagogic assistants (in ordinary secondary schools, this is not always the case) who are in charge of supporting learning and teaching (whether through working with teachers and/or students).

Although this study was carried out in three RS between 2011 and 2013, the analysis only focuses on the two schools where fieldwork was finished by the time of writing up this piece. School 'A' is located in a middle-class neighbourhood in a well-preserved nineteenth-century small building. In 2012, it had around 100 students. It operated in one shift during the evening. It shared the building with a primary school that worked during the morning and afternoon shifts.[13] Autonomy over the use of the school premises was restricted to offices, some classrooms, the library and a computer room. According to the head teacher, pedagogic assistant and teachers, the social intake was socially mixed and made up by low middle-class and working-class pupils, young people in care, and some were temporarily living in sport institutions[14] from different parts of the city. Only a few lived alone. According to the school authorities, many students work and a few girls were pregnant or were mothers. According to teachers, the majority came from 'vulnerable families' with emotional and relationship problems.

School 'B' is located in a socially mixed area (characterised by low middle-class houses and flats, and by slums). In 2012, at the beginning of the school year, it had almost 500 students split into two shifts. It was the biggest RS in the City. Although the school shares its building with a workers' self-managed factory (recovered factory) and a community radio station, school authorities had control over its premises. According to the school's statistics of 2012, the majority of its population came from one nearby slum. Numerous youngsters lived alone. A few were homeless. Several were the heads of their families. Only a few were sent to the school by penal or family local courts. According to authorities and teachers, many boys and girls were working in non-formal occupations (the former mainly in construction and the latter as house cleaners). A fourth of the girls were mothers and/or were pregnant. Numerous pupils had health issues related to drug addictions.

The study encompassed individual and group interviews (with a school inspector, head teachers, pedagogic assistants, area coordinators, teachers, tutors, workshop leaders – *talleristas*– and pastoral assistants); participant observations of school events, staff meetings and lessons; and documentary analysis of public and semi-public documents produced by the national and local governments, and the schools. Fieldwork was carried out from December 2010 up to March 2013 in school 'A', and from March 2012 until March 2013 in school 'B'. This article presents the

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thematic analysis of informal and formal interviews carried out with two head teachers (23 in total) and three school inspectors.

After describing the RS, the schools of this study and the research strategy, the next analytic sections turns to consider 'inclusion' policy as text, enactment and discourses in turn.

5. 'Inclusion' in the City and RS. Policy texts as ambiguous horizons for action

At the beginning of the 2000s, in the City of Buenos Aires, there was evidence of relatively high levels of repetition in the first and second school year and of a sharp decrease in the number of pupils enrolled in the third school year. Furthermore, in 2001, around 8300 young people between 13 and 17 years old were out of school (Tiramonti et al. 2007). In this context, Law 898 was passed in 2002 and it transformed secondary schooling into a compulsory level of education. With this law, the city government 'aimed at integrating young people who were out of the system', and at diminishing levels of school drop-out by 'incorporating 3000 pupils per year during the next five years' (Law 898, 1 – my translation). They wanted to 'guarantee young people equal opportunities to access, stay in schools and achieve' (Law 898, 1 – my translation). This ambitious policy target was reflected in the elaboration of a wide range of policy documents, the design and funding of educational programmes and an increase in the educational budget (Tiramonti et al. 2007).

Law 898 states that the government of the city has to 'gradually adapt, in five years, educational services to guarantee the extension of compulsory education, increasing and changing buildings and providing required equipment' (Law 898, 1 – my translation). Moreover, it states that the local government should deploy different types of programmes to achieve this fundamental aim, such as: (i) learning support initiatives targeted at students 'whose socio-economic circumstances justify it'; (ii) pedagogical and technical support to schools to improve retention rates; and, (iii) curricular reforms and teaching training.

This policy text aimed at profoundly changing educational practices in the city (Lingard and Ozga 2007). Up to 2000, completing secondary schooling was considered a private matter and not the state responsibility or a policy priority (Codd 1988). Transforming high school into compulsory education involved the inclusion of young people from socio-economic groups who had been historically excluded from this educational level. Law No. 898 established very ambitious policy goals and created specific circumstances for schools and teachers to work with (which restricted or altered their actions and priorities) without proposing clear courses of actions for schools and policy actors (Ball 1993). In this way, it created new problems and priorities for schools, teachers and head teachers (Ball 1993; Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012).

The creation of the RS was part and parcel of a wide-range policy strategy designed to implement Law No. 898. Three short policy documents (*Decreto* 408, *Resolución* 4539/GCABA/SED/05, *Resolución* 814/GCBA/SED/0) establish the academic organisation, the programme of study and specific working conditions of groups of teachers in the RS.[15] They also state the requirements for enrolling in such schools: being out of the school at least for a complete academic year, and being between 16 and 18 years old to be enrolled in the first year or level. The most important document is the *Resolución* 814/GCBA/SED/0. It states that RS should

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'respond to the needs and characteristics' of their students through the implementation of a 'flexible academic regime' respecting individual learning 'rhythms' (2). According to this policy document, RS have to be able to individualise pedagogic strategies to promote learning. However, this policy text does not define what these 'needs' and 'characteristics' are, who should identify them and how they could relate or impact on the school's institutional ethos, formal organisation, priorities or teachers' pedagogic practices and views about their work. Moreover, it does not define the school or the form classes' 'needs' nor how these could interact or conflict with those of individual learners'. In other words, the vague and general tone of this policy document posed problems, rather than solutions for RS, their head teachers and teachers. According to interviewed head teachers and school inspectors, policy officials and RS school actors (in particular head teachers) have struggled over these meanings. Their work as policy translators has been crucial to define the schools' logics of actions, their ethos, aims and understanding of what a RS is and should be.[16]

Now it is time to assess how the RS policy mandate has been translated, interpreted and enacted by the two head teachers.

6. Head teachers as policy actors: the educational and the socio-educational understanding of 'inclusion'

As in the *Escuelas Medias de Educación Municipales* (municipal schools) created in the 1990s in the City (Más Rocha 2006), Marta (head teacher of the school 'A') and Roberto (head teacher of the school 'B') were personally recruited by local government educational authorities due to, according to them, their 'commitment' and interest in working in this type of schools. This selection process differs from that of head teachers' of state schools who get their posts by open and public competition or, in specific circumstances, by bypassing formal assessments – due to massive recruitment policies called '*procesos de titularización masiva*' (Aguerrondo, Lugo, and Schurmann 2011; Mezzadra and Bilbao 2011).

Before being selected, they had experiences teaching 'non-traditional' secondary students: Marta with students with special education needs and from vulnerable families; Roberto with students from very poor backgrounds. They were both critical – in different ways – of the 'traditional' secondary school. Marta criticised the lack of 'good teachers' in secondary schools and Roberto emphasised their inability to recognise students' individual histories and social and family circumstances.

In line with British and Latin American research (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012; Jacinto and Freytes Frey 2004; Maddonni 2014; Tenti Fanfani, Frederic, and Steinberg 2009), these head teachers show awareness of the multilayered complexity of the policy process and of their central role in resignifying national and educational policy texts and documents. Marta and Roberto argue that educational policies and initiatives need to be put into practice into specific socio-institutional contexts. In their words,

> Each ministry of education in each province *baja* (imposes) a very general framework to work. But then, each school is a reality on its own, is a world apart, like a family. You have to manage [the school] with the reality you have, always within the legal margins (Marta, Head teacher of school 'A')

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> I always emphasise the role of the institutional culture (…) if you define this school only by its [formal] format, well, I could tell you that this format is attractive. But the important thing is what actors do with that format. With this format [*Escuela de Reingreso* (RS)], you could create a school that expels students, even when it's been created to include *pibes* [young people] who are outside the system (Roberto, head teacher of school 'B')

Despite their differences, they conceive schools as significant policy arenas where 'the discourse of the state' (Codd 1988) clashes with schools' realities and cultures. Both understood schools as unique social worlds that shape how policy is done. On the one hand, Marta argues that policies only offer 'very general frames' and her job was to define them at her school in relation to its particularities (Braun, Ball, and Maguire 2011). Roberto, on the other hand, emphasised the role of the 'institutional culture' of every school and stated that a RS could expel students, rather than including them. In other words, 'what actors do with the format' could work against a school's official mandates.

Marta and Roberto recontextualised and produced two antagonistic versions of 'inclusion': what I call the 'educational' and the 'socio-educational' perspectives. These are different policy translations and interpretations that define key aspects of their school's logic of action (Ball and Maroy 2009; Braun, Ball, and Maguire 2011; Braun et al. 2011). In order to unpack them, next I examine their contrasting takes on key aspects of the production of a 'proper' school: its purpose, the construction of 'the teacher', 'the student', and the symbolic and material boundaries between the school and other educational and non-educational organisations and actors (Dubet and Martuccelli 1998; Maguire et al. 2011). In this way, on the one hand, I critically engage with British policy analysis and French sociology of education research (Ball et al. 2011b; Ball, Maguire and Braun 2012; Dubet 2007; Dubet and Martuccelli 1998; Maguire et al. 2011). While the former has emphasised the significance of the three first aspects to unpack schooling, the latter has also pointed at the relevance of the symbolic and material boundaries between the school and 'the outside' – the social world. On the other hand, I explore head teachers views on key aspects of schooling that have been overlooked by local studies (Gluz 2006; Gluz and Rodriguez Moyano 2013; Jacinto and Freytes Frey 2004; Montesinos, Schoo, and Sinisi 2009; Tenti Fanfani, Frederic, and Steinberg 2009).

6.1. An educational understanding of inclusion: 'that's not a proper school'

Marta has been the head teacher of the school 'A' since its creation in 2006. Before this, she taught biology in different types of state secondary schools (in terms of their socio-economic intake, geographical location and academic organisation). For a short period, she was the head teacher of a secondary school targeted at students with special educational needs. Marta comes from a 'teacher family' (*familia docente*). Her mum and grandmother were teachers. Since a young age she 'knew' that she had to be a teacher. She praises herself for being a 'flexible' teacher who knows well her subject and who could work with variety of students. When she was invited to apply for this position, she knew nothing about the social and academic organisation of the school. She accepted it because it was a professional challenge. She valued different aspects of the RS, such as its organisation around students' achievements and the recognition of students' different rhythms and trajectories. She considered that her school was 'completely different' from other RS. Marta argued

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that the population of her school differed in terms of where they lived (the majority came from different neighbourhoods), and the relatively better social and economic family circumstances of the majority of her pupils.

Following Jacinto and Freytes Frey (2004), Marta's leadership style could be interpreted as 'interpersonal', characterised by a hands-on, face-to-face and individualist approach to organisational decisions (such as the selection of area coordinators, sharing information about curricular or assessment changes) and conflicts (whether between students, between teachers and students). For example, she avoided organising staff meetings (because 'they are not very effective') and preferred communicating ideas and projects to individuals and small groups. She was always walking around the school, visiting teachers in the staff room, looking at classrooms through their windows from the corridors, and interacting with adults and young people. She was respected by teachers and students.

Due to the writerly[17] nature (Bowe, Ball, and Gold 1992) of the RS policy mandate, Marta had to set her own policy goals, priorities and strategies (whether in more or less formalised, explicit and even conscious ways) for teaching and pastoral staff and had to privilege ways of working and interacting in and outside of the classroom. In so doing, she produced an image of the 'proper' and legitimate goals of schooling that permeated her school's 'logics of actions' (Ball and Maroy 2009). According to her:

> We also have drug addiction workshops, sexual education workshop, but from the school perspective. I mean, these activities are organised and delivered by teachers to their form classes. This is something else that the schools offers, it's part of teaching. Trying to do this in another way (…) is useless. I think the school only has to be a trampoline so you could get a secondary school degree, so you could change your antisocial behaviour, could help you to be more adjusted to what society is, so you could know how to move in this society, and you know where, when you are, so you could get an educational degree, get tools and support, and self-esteem so you could continue with something else. But, this idea supported by many RS head teachers that the school is 'the healer', 'the carer', no. That's not a proper school.

Marta recontextualises the RS policy mandate as 'teaching' and she explicitly disregarded the idea of a school that 'heals' and 'cures'. She was demarcating symbolic boundaries between what she did and what other head teachers did (whether in other RS or in other schools for young people from poor and socially vulnerable families). Although she accepted that social and health issues needed to be addressed by the school, this had to be done by teachers and within the material and symbolic boundaries of the classroom. Outsiders (such as non-educational experts and grass roots organisations) were not welcomed. She argued that the school should socialise, educate and contribute to the production of young people's subjectivity. However, according to her, it had to do so by producing a 'proper' school mainly focused on classroom learning (whether of dispositions, skills or knowledge).

With regards to teachers' 'proper' job, Marta saw it as an individual and mainly classroom-based profession (Dubet 2007; Tyack and Tobin 1994). In her view, teachers' subject knowledge expertise was a defining feature (Southwell 2011a). However, she also argued that the ability to individualise teaching and assessment methods was fundamental. In this sense, she recognised that certain aspects of teaching needed to change. In her words,

> [A good teacher] has to know their subject or at least being able to prepare a lesson. That's crucial. He needs to be committed to the school, being on time, always comes (…) it's also very important that they forge good relations with colleagues and

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> students. It's very important that teachers know their students, that they are not numbers. They have to know each student, not his personal life but who they are, which modules are attending because of the curricular system of the school. They have to participate in a school project and do stuff.

Marta had a clear idea of what a 'good teacher' should be in the RS. She interpreted that 'responding to students' needs' (*Resolución* Nº 814/SED/04) demanded a teacher who was 'committed', approachable, punctual, involved in school projects and, most importantly, able to recognise their students and their academic trajectory. In different exchanges, she stated that one of the crucial contemporary educational problems was the incapacity of the majority of teachers to teach. In line with research on secondary school teachers' dominant views on compulsory education, Marta idealised the past of secondary school when social backgrounds and educational expectations of teachers' and students' matched (Dubet and Martuccelli 1998; Montesinos, Schoo, and Sinisi 2009). However, according to Marta, the majority of teachers needed some time to learn how to deal with pupils who had interrupted educational trajectories. Only a minority of them was reluctant and 'unable' to change.

Marta's narratives around the purposes of schooling were also intimately linked with her views on students' educational engagement. Unpacking how school actors conceive educational achievement and failure contributes to illuminate key aspects of the 'black box' of schooling (Mehan 1992). Following, Marta spells out her vision on educational engagement and students' and families' responsibilities:

> You have bursaries, the state school is free, you don't pay a penny, teachers' salaries are paid by the state, your family pays your travel expenses, right? –which is subsidised by the State-. I think that the job of the student is to study. I always tell them 'your job is to study' and they are not going to tell me that they cannot because that's their responsibility.

For this head teacher, educational disengagement and failure were mainly explained by the lack of parenting skills and students' lack of individual responsibility. In line with recent Argentinean research (Montesinos and Sinisi 2009; Southwell 2011a), Marta marginalised the role that the school played in students' 'failure'. In this individualising perspective, the school was a neutral scenario where students who 'study' and are 'responsible' achieve. Unlike emergent discourses on inclusion, Marta seemed to misrecognise the power of school and non-school factors in excluding students from secondary education.

One last aspect contributes to delineating Marta's 'educational' reading and enactment of inclusion: her approach to the relationships between the school and other educational and non-educational organisations and actors. This demarcates and 'produces' particular material and symbolic boundaries between the school and the 'outside' social world. Marta's views on 'socio-educational programs' also illustrate what a 'proper' school is and should do.

In 2011 and 2012, there were different socio-educational programmes operating in secondary schools in the City of Buenos Aires (Krichesky et al. 2011). Programmes of this kind started to operate in schools during the 1990s. The majority were funded by the provincial education ministry. Many of them devoted economic and technical assistance to support individual schools in the implementation of pedagogic institutional projects aiming to counteract high levels of students' dropout and repetition. However, national state agencies and non-governmental organisations also

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played a variable role in their conception and delivery (Montesinos and Sinisi 2009). Only a few operated as mandatory (such as the *Plan de Mejora Institucional* – Institutional Improvement Plan – which was run by the National Ministry of Education). Many of them depended on individual schools' request for its operation (such as *Retención de alumnas madres, alumnas embarazadas y alumnos en situación de paternidad* – Programme for pregnant girls and teenage mothers and fathers).

Marta assesses the role of 'socio-educational programs' operating in the school, such as the national programme *Plan de Mejora Institucional*, the school bursaries provincial programme and the socio-educational support provincial programme *Programa de Asistencia a las Escuelas Medias en el Área Socio-Educativa (Technical Support for schools on Socio-Educational Issues)*, which offers psychological, social and technical support to schools to deal with 'problematic situations' (*situaciones complejas*) involving students –such as violence and behavioural problems (Ministerio de Educación de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires 2013):

> I think that they [socio-educational programmes in the school] are just covering holes (…) There is not a radical change (…) They are mere patches. For instance, they [the secretary of education] promotes that two teachers teach together [this is called 'pedagogic partnership'[17]] to one form class when, really, teachers ought to be able to individually deliver a lesson in a form class made up by 20 students.

Unlike findings of earlier studies on RS (Tiramonti et al. 2007), Marta understood (national and provincial) 'socio-educational' programmes as mere 'patches'. They were not able to solve structural problems (such as the difficulties that many teachers have dealing with a group of students). Hence, she invested marginal human and material resources to run them at the school. Only a few socio-educational programmes operated in the school: two that were imposed by the national and the provincial educational ministries, and three that have been activated by Marta, such as the *Programa de Asistencia a Escuelas medias en el Área Socio Educativa, and Programa de Formación de Espectadores (Teaching Audience Programme)* – programmes for educating critical cinema audiences. According to Marta, these programmes were not central aspects of what a 'proper' school does (mainly because they were 'useless' to offer solutions to current educational structural problems).

After portraying the key features of the 'educational' take on inclusion of Marta, it is time to depict the 'socio-educational' approach of Roberto, how he interprets the RS policy mandate and how he defines a 'proper' school and contributes to the production of the 'teacher', the 'student' and the relationships between the school and the 'outside' social world.

6.2. A socio-educational understanding of inclusion: 'a school without walls'

Roberto comes from a working-class family. He has been the head teacher of this school since its creation in 2004. Before this appointment, during the 1980s, he was a factory worker and a volunteer in different grass roots organisations. In the following decade, he worked as history, geography and social studies teacher. He taught in a secondary school that worked with young people from a nearby slum. He enjoyed teaching and interacting with young people. He was invited to apply for his position at school 'B' due to, according to a school inspector, his commitment and teaching work at his former school. He stated that, at the time of the fieldwork, school 'B'

was 'del barrio' (from this neighbourhood) in a double sense. First, the majority of its students came for the proximities (mainly from a slum). Second, the school had developed formal and informal links with different state and non-state organisations operating in 'el barrio' (such as a community radio; the local hospital and health and dental health centres; etc.).

In line with local research on recent discourses on head teachers' new roles in schools for *sectores populares*,[18] Roberto saw himself as the coordinator of a managerial team (which included the vice-head teacher and two pedagogic assistants) who viewed their school as part of a wider 'network' of organisations and actors that contributed to unpacking what their students' (social and pedagogic) needs were and how to address them (Manzione 2011). Roberto was proud of organising several whole staff meetings during the year and for promoting teachers' participations in the school's educational, material and social matters (through their involvement in different teams with variable roles and composition). He was trying to develop a 'collegial' type of leadership by involving more teachers in the everyday running of the school (although, like in every school, he remained legally responsible for all the decisions made) (Jacinto and Freytes Frey 2004).

As in other secondary schools working with young people from vulnerable families in Argentina (Acosta 2012; Maddonni 2014; Tiramonti 2004, 2011a), Roberto considered that the RS should go beyond the 'transmission of knowledge' and socialisation. The following extracts illustrate his 'socio-educational' approach to the purposes of schooling and how it differs from a restricted one:

> A good secondary school is not only about the transmission of knowledge. It really goes beyond that. It creates a space where you belong, that fosters students' voice, and recognises their rights.

> If you don't want every young person in the school, why are you going to have the program for teenage mums, the drug addiction workshop like us? Why are you going to have a health program in the school if you are not interested in having everybody in the school? If you think that those who want could come, and those who don't, that's their problem, well, you are not going to build up relationships with social organizations and [socio-educational] programs the government offers. Because you think it's not necessary. In addition to this, well, this is more work! The last weekend my wife and I worked filling forms for one of the programs.

Unlike Marta, Roberto argued that his school had to foster 'students' voices' and recognise 'their rights' (not just their right to be educated). This version of a 'good school' demanded assuming new tasks and a proactive role in addressing and defining students' non-educational needs in and by the school. These were a priority for Roberto. The second extract illustrates how this view converged with specific and distinctive institutional practices (Maguire et al. 2011), the presence of a myriad of non-school actors that were absent in Marta's school and the intensification of Roberto's and his colleagues' work. The deployment of similar strategies by some RS has also been documented by other studies (Krichesky et al. 2007; Maddonni 2014; Tiramonti et al. 2007). In Roberto's school grounds, for instance, students had access to vaccination; got psychological support if requested; obtained information on sexual health from the local hospital staff; got access to support to deal with drug addictions from city government health workers; participated in job training sessions of different kinds organised by the National Ministry of Work, Employment and Social Security (*Ministerio de Trabajo, Empleo y Seguridad Social*); and were invited to take part in a variety of extra-curricular activities organised or funded by

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different governmental and non-governmental organisations (such as teacher unions, different areas of the National Ministry of Education and a human rights NGO).

Aligned with recent studies on the official demands on head teachers in schools for students 'at risk' (Gluz and Moyano 2013; Manzione 2011; Tenti Fanfani, Frederic, and Steinberg 2009), this 'socio-educational' approach was intimately linked with Roberto's concern with the construction of a 'network' with non-school actors, whose views illuminated aspects that have been historically misrecognised by schools and teachers (Dubet and Martuccelli 1998; Tyack and Tobin 1994). In Roberto's words:

> We need to develop links with others, we are part of a network (…), with people who are not teachers. For instance, Sara had experience working with street children and worked as the tutors' coordinator in the school. Another example is Raimundo who is one of the coordinators of what we call the 'workshop of drug addictions' [*taller de adicciones*]. He offers us an insight on how to work with young people whose rights have been disregarded. Someone has violated their rights. (…) Their view help us to understand the *pibes* [this Spanish word means boys and girls]. This understanding helps teachers to do their job better. It helps them to position themselves differently with regard to their pupils and what they have to do.

In line with Maddonni's (2014) and Tiramonti et al.'s (2007) studies on RS, this extract evidences the relevance of a social understanding of these non-school actors. In Roberto's views, non-school actors offered perspectives, experiences and insights for teachers to deal with the complexities of their students' lives (which also involved tensions and conflict). Moreover, this understanding assumed that the school and its teachers needed to integrate wider social issues into their everyday practices.

With regard to teachers' work, Roberto also had a different understanding from Marta's. In line with the school's goals, he understood that teacher's work should be done with others (teachers and other professionals, and in and outside the classroom) in order to effectively deal with multifaceted social, family and personal circumstances of their pupils. The following extract illustrates how he mobilised educational management discourses valuing teachers' team work and the extension of their work identities (Grinberg 2006; Hoyle 1975; Manzione 2011).

> To work in this type of school, it's necessary to generate a support network that involves not only the head teacher but every school actor. (…) To work in these schools, you have to come with a fully charged battery and a replacement. Because your battery runs out in 40 minutes during the lesson time. You have to have a replacement, and to do so you need to be supported (…). In relation to teachers work, today the answer cannot be individual anymore. Answers have to be institutional. (…) it's not useful that teachers work alone. Realities are very complex.

Unlike Marta, Roberto considered that teachers' expertise was not a defining quality of a 'proper' teacher. In different interviews, Roberto stressed that teachers needed emotional support from peers to deal with pupils' challenging lives. However, in line with the international and national educational discourses on the centrality of emotions and on socio-situational learning, they both stressed the individualised and affective character of teaching (Hargreaves 1998; Nobile 2011; Ziegler and Nobile 2012).

Finally, Roberto's view on educational engagement also offer clues as to his way of recentring and resignifying 'inclusion' and the RS policy mandates (Ball 1993; Ball et al. 2011a; Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012). Unlike Marta, he argued that

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socio-economic inequalities and the violation of students' human rights were the key explaining factors of their lack of educational engagement:

> We need to approach students' lives in their complexity. Who comes here is a subject of rights, is a person, a human being, is not a student. The student has to be produced, that takes time. We need to give them time, I say to a teacher 'don't be silly, you need to understand, the student is not insulting you, he is cursing life, his mum, his alcoholic father who'd raped him'.

In different interviews, Roberto stated that the RS and its teachers need to help young people who had difficult educational trajectories and lived in complex personal and family circumstances to become 'students' and to understand its rules, aims and legitimate ways to behave and interact. However, unlike the personalised version of educational engagement of Marta, Roberto highlighted the socio-structural conditions that strongly shaped how young people dealt with schools' and teachers' demands and expectations.

The next section discusses how Marta's and Roberto's policy readings and enactment were forged in a specific discursive scenario which set boundaries for their thoughts, priorities and practices. I unearth key aspects of two competing educational policy discourses: what I call 'selection and homogenization' and the 'inclusion and personalisation'. Furthermore, I map these discourses onto Marta's and Roberto's policy understandings. In so doing, I trace their historic and discursive roots, as well as how they have shaped different and problematic discursive positions for head teachers to take up.

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7. Policy as discourse and head teachers as policy subjects: discussion

So far, this analysis has shown that Marta and Roberto were crucial gatekeepers and policy actors who opened up or restricted the ways in which an 'inclusive' school was defined, either in terms of what goals they should have, how teachers should teach, how students' educational engagement should be conceived, or with whom the school should establish alliances or avoid exchanges (Gewirtz and Ball 2000). These head teachers illustrate how conflicting views about 'inclusion' were being enacted in similar academic and pedagogic organisations and by head teachers who were critical of the traditional and selective secondary school (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012; Braun et al. 2011). While Roberto interprets a secondary school as a place where young people's human rights had to be recognized (including that of education), Marta considered it as an educational institution – where the focus on curriculum learning was paramount.

However, these head teachers were also 'policy subjects'. Their narratives drew upon two contemporary and antagonistic educational discourses (although in different ways and degrees): what I call 'selection and homogenization' and the 'inclusion and personalisation'. Each of them could be interpreted as discursive formations that 'converge with institutions and practices, and carry meanings that may be common to a whole period' (Foucault 1986, 118). They encompass different discourses on learning, behaviour, teaching, educational failure and seem to configure a 'sort of great, uniform text' (Foucault 1986, 118). These antagonistic educational discourses could be traced in contemporary policy texts, initiatives and educational programmes; funding priorities; the organisation of the school's space and time; and policy actors' practices and views (including school inspectors, head teachers,

teachers and students) around the compulsory nature of secondary schooling. National, federal and local authorities, schools and school actors are immersed in symbolic and material disputes between these discourses (Montesinos, Schoo, and Sinisi 2009; Tenti Fanfani, Frederic, and Steinberg 2009). Unlike other contexts (such as the UK with the dominance of the performativity discourse), Argentinean quantitative and qualitative research evidences conflicts around the meaning and aims of compulsory secondary schooling and its pedagogic and institutional organisations (Aguerrondo 2008; Acosta 2009, 2012; Baquero et al. 2009; Montes and Ziegler 2012; Montesinos, Schoo, and Sinisi 2009). It shows how the introduction of recent 'inclusive' policy texts and documents (such as the National Law of Education in 2006 and the resolutions of the *Consejo Federal de Educación* [CFE]) has not been followed by radical transformations of educational practices at school level.

The 'selection and homogenisation' discourse (or 'traditional secondary schooling' discourse) has been dominant since the inception of formal secondary schooling at the end of the nineteenth century in Argentina until the 1990s.[19] Concepts such as 'grammar schooling' (Tyack and Tobin 1994), 'modern institutional program' (Dubet 2007), 'school format' (Southwell 2011a; Terigi 2012) and 'academic regime' (Baquero et al. 2009) have been used by researchers to capture some of its persistent key traits. It has upheld standardised organisational practices of time, space and teaching; classification and allocation of students according to their age and academic performance; breakdown of knowledge into modules or subjects; and subject-based teachers' work (Montes and Ziegler 2010; Southwell 2011a).

Within the 'selection and homogenisation' discourse, Argentinean secondary schooling has been historically produced as a selective and elitist educational level. This educational discourse has fostered a homogenising approach to teaching and learning ('one size fits all'), and has historically misrecognised students' socio-economic and cultural differences and identities (Dussel 2004; Southwell 2011b). In this sense, secondary schooling has been symbolically and materially produced as an enclosed 'sacred' space, completely different from the 'outside' world, where private interests, particularisms and localism have no place (Acosta 2012; Dubet and Martuccelli 1998; Southwell 2011b). Within this discourse, hierarchies, inclusions and exclusions have revolved around a meritocratic and individualist understanding of students' educational engagement. The exam has been used to rank, discipline and normalise students (Foucault 1975). Educational failure has signalled out the 'deviant'. Learning difficulties have been interpreted as the result of students' individual pathologies which have to be treated clinically (Terigi 2009). Educational psychology has played a crucial role in this discursive construction since the beginning of the twentieth century (Aguerrondo 2008; Terigi 2009).

The 'inclusion and personalisation' discourse, on the other hand, has gained legitimacy and influence at international and regional levels since the 1990s (Amadio 2009). Different international educational and non-educational organisations – such as UNESCO, the European Union and the *Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe* (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) – have produced a variety of texts and documents which have strongly influenced national educational policies and agendas. 'Educational inclusion', together with 'social inclusion' and 'social cohesion', has been a pivotal concept offering a new global horizon for educational practices at basic schooling (Vaillant 2009). According to UNESCO (2009, 8–9), inclusion is:

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> a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.

This international educational policy discourse is ambiguous and ambivalent and it has been recontextualised in dissimilar ways, emphasis and with different consequences in different parts of the world (Amadio 2009; Armstrong, Armstrong, and Spandagou, 2011; Rambla et al. 2008). In Argentina, it encompasses sets of policy ensembles that seem to challenge some crucial aspects of the historical 'grammar' of secondary schooling. This discourse fosters an understanding of secondary school learning as compulsory and fundamental for 'the effective social and cultural inclusion of every teenager, young person and adult' (CFE 2009, 3 – my translation).[20] Despite certain ambivalences, it fosters an understanding of social inequalities as the main cause of unequal educational opportunities, which 'demands the recognition of injustices and its effects, and the acceptance of a debt with the dispossessed groups' (*sectores más desposeídos*) (CFE 2009, 6 – my translation). Moreover, it recognises the institutional fragmentation and the selective and meritocratic character of secondary schooling as significant problems that need to be addressed (CFE 2009). These policy documents offer a new language to refer to its aims, teaching practices and pedagogic identities. They set as policy priority the institutional transformation of the schools. Key elements of this new policy horizon are: (1) overcoming the historical fragmentation of teachers' work; (2) the revision of the available pedagogic knowledge; (3) the promotion of 'pedagogic and institutional alternatives to promote rights respecting local and community needs, urban and rural, through actions that allow reaching results of equal quality across the country and for every social situation' (*Ley de Educación Nacional* 26.206 2006, clause 16 – my translation); (4) the revision of 'schooling experience of those who are in school, those who should come back and those who haven't been able to go to school' (CFE 2009, 4 – my translation); and, (5) the recognition of teenagers and young people as socially and culturally diverse 'subjects of rights' who hold legitimate knowledge that the school should integrate.

Rather than radical transformations, as mentioned above, evidence points at symbolic and material struggles around the aims of schooling; the construction of the teacher and the student; and the boundaries of a 'proper' school. On the one hand, contemporary quantitative research shows the persistence of repetition and dropout levels (Rivas, Vera, and Bezem 2010). Qualitative studies, on the other hand, evidence a mixed scenario. First, documentary analyses show how the policy texts' vocabulary departs from that of the 'selective and homogenising' approach to secondary schooling (Duro and Perazza n.d.). Second, some studies argue that teachers hold traditional views with regard to educational failure and consider that individual, family and/or social circumstances are to blame for students' lack of educational engagement, repetition and drop out (Montesinos, Schoo, and Sinisi 2009). Third, other research shows transformations of institutional, educational and pedagogic practices in different types of schools, evidencing the emergence of an 'inclusion and personalisation' discourse (Acosta 2009, 2012; Baquero et al. 2009; Krichesky et al. 2011; Montes and Ziegler 2010; Nobile 2010). The competing 'selection and homogenization' and 'inclusion and personalisation' discourses configure the

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symbolic and material complex scenario from where Marta and Roberto draw upon their policy views, understandings and resources. Their narratives were immersed in policy discourses that fostered conflicting understandings of the purpose of schooling and its role in students' socialisation, education and identity making. These competing educational discourses imposed on head teachers limits to their interpretations and to what they could imagine, say and do.

On the one hand, Marta deployed a hybrid narrative where certain pillars of traditional secondary schooling remain untouched, while others (such as the recognition of the centrality of personalisation of learning) were altered. Her interpretations were shaped by crucial aspects of the 'selection and homogenization' discourse and by other elements of the 'inclusion and personalisation' one. They opened up contradictory subject positions that Marta inhabited. However, she did so in such ways that the 'new', the inclusive discourse,[21] was incorporated and reinscribed in the 'old' and traditional secondary schooling discourse. Marta believed that schools needed to adapt to external changes. In line with research on recent transformations of teaching methods, Marta argued that the use of more flexible and personalised approaches to teaching was paramount (Ziegler and Nobile 2012). However, in her narrative, parents and students (in different degrees) were responsible for young people's failures and interrupted trajectories. In other words, the school's transformation had to be done within the symbolic boundaries of the historic 'proper' secondary school, which has been historically constructed as different and separate from the outside world and as a neutral apolitical terrain where teaching and learning take place (Dubet 2007; Tyack and Tobin 1994). In this way, her policy reading was locked within an individualist perspective of educational engagement and failure, which misrecognised the school and the teachers' roles in their production.

Roberto's narratives, on the other hand, were mainly forged within the boundaries of the 'inclusive and personalized' discourse, which unsettled fundamental aspects of the traditional secondary school. He was 'spoken' by concepts and vocabularies (such as human rights, students' voices, network, team work, etc.) forged by the local 'inclusive' educational discourse. He argued that traditional schooling needed to be radically transformed by responding to students' needs and particularities (in particular emotional and socio-economic). Within the 'moving' boundaries of this discursive framework, Roberto was able to imagine the school as a place where teachers had to work 'with others' to address pupils' complex realities. He imagined his school 'with no walls' (in his words) and where working with other professionals, organisations and agencies were part and parcel of what a 'good' school had to do. Roberto's understanding of the symbolic and material boundaries of the school were embedded in the emergent 'inclusion and personalisation' discourses, which fostered the recognition of student's socio-economic and family-specific circumstances and demands reconfigurations of the school's logic of practice. Studies show that this socio-educational version of 'inclusion' is shaping the views and practices of different school actors (such as school inspectors, head teachers and teachers) in numerous secondary schools working with vulnerable young people across the City (Acosta 2009; Tiramonti 2011b; Tiramonti et al. 2007). These practices and ways to inhabit and produce the symbolic and material space of the school challenged the 'traditional' discourse on schooling and its historic denial of the social, economic and the political world where it is inscribed (Acosta 2009; Dubet 2007; Dubet and Martuccelli 1998). Roberto's understanding of an inclusive school was a complex one. On the one hand, he argued that the school should pivot

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around its pupils' social needs and rights. On the other hand, he considered that teachers had to address them in their pedagogic practices. However, mainly due to teachers' working conditions – such as the lack of time for meetings and trainings, the high level of teachers' autonomy within their classrooms and the concomitant diversity of approaches to learning goals, methods and evaluation – Roberto and his school's priorities were mainly focused on pupils' socio-structural needs and on developing institutional strategies to tackle them. As analysed above, his school was a fertile ground for all sorts of activities and initiatives addressing pupils' complex lives and their consequences – such as the lack of access to health services; marginal participation in artistic endeavours (in and out the school); and difficulties obtaining formal jobs. In this way, Roberto's policy interpretation seemed to be effectively 'trapped' within a socio-structural approach that marginalised how RS teachers' dispositions, views and practices might be contributing and/or hampering students' educational engagement. In this way, he was articulating elements of the inclusive discourse, such as the personalisation of teaching and the recognition of the central role played by pupils' socio-economic circumstances – with aspects of the traditional discourse, such as teachers' working conditions that favoured individual teaching, lack of accountability of their teaching methods and serious difficulties promoting team work.

Despite significant differences between Marta's and Roberto's creative policy enactments of 'inclusion' in two RS, they both were hailed by the symbolic contradictions, conflicts and lacunae that the antagonistic educational discourses create and reproduce within specific material and working conditions. Moreover, they both drew upon a 'personalising' approach to education – although in different ways. Understanding policy as text, enactment and discourse helps to link the micro with the meso and macro levels. On the one hand, Marta and Roberto made decisions and forged policy readings of educational policy texts vis a vis their very different professional trajectories, school intakes, the location and material resources of their schools, teachers' professional cultures and working conditions, and schools' positions within the local school system (in terms of size, reputation, access to resources and links with other schools and organisations). As policy actors, they illustrated how creativity was a crucial aspect of policy translation. On the other hand, head teachers enacted 'inclusion' by drawing on existing contradictory vocabularies, meanings and views of what a proper school, teachers and pupils should look like. These were part and parcel of a wider scenario where symbolic and material struggles take place. In this sense, as policy subjects, they embodied the contradictions, limits and tensions of their time.

8. Conclusion

This paper has examined how two head teachers are shaped by and shape 'inclusion' in two RS, and has demonstrated the usefulness of Ball and his colleagues' conceptual tools to make sense of the policy process in a different context to theirs. In addition to this, it has shown the coexistence of competing policy discourses in Argentina, how two head teachers embodied their contradictions and tensions and how they do so in creative and distinctive ways. Finally, it has shown how educational discourses opened up contradictory positions for head teachers which – although in specific ways – misrecognised the significance of the role of teaching and pedagogic methods in the construction of school 'failure' and 'success'. In this

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way, head teachers' policy readings set boundaries to their imagination and action that could be contributing to the reproduction of educational inequalities.

This analysis has tied together conceptual tools from British policy analysis and the French sociology of education to contribute to a multilayered take on how 'inclusion' policy is shaped, and shapes, central aspects of what goes on in two RS in the City of Buenos Aires. While British research offers a fruitful lens with which to understand the policy process as text, enactment and discourse, French analyses demand paying attention to the symbolic and material historical and contemporary links of secondary schooling with the 'outside' social world. In this article, the latter has allowed me to elaborate Ball and colleagues' contribution to the field of policy analysis. In this way, my analysis of how 'inclusion' is done by, and done to, head teachers has offered new analytic and substantive questions that are worthy of engagement by educational policy researchers elsewhere.

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Notes

1. The indicator *sobreedad* refers to those students who are older than the school expected age of the school year they are attending. The *sobreedad* could be related to accessing the school system at an older age, repetition of one or more school years, or drop out from school (Ministerio de Educación 2013).
2. For instance, the lowest level of interannual school retention between 2002 and 2009 was registered in school districts located in areas with the highest levels of social and economic vulnerability.
3. For example, the *Escuelas de Educación Media* – municipal schools – (*formerly Escuelas Municipales de Educación Media*) have the highest rates of repetition and *sobreedad* in comparison to the technical, artistic and 'normal' schools. These different types of schools differ in terms of their institutional history, curricular projects, and socio-economic intakes.
4. For example, only 64% of 17-year-old students from poor families (bajo nivel socio-económico) attended secondary school in 2011, while this figure reached 98% amongst students from wealthy families (alto nivel socio-económico) (SITEAL 2012).
5. Some jurisdictions, like the province of Buenos Aires and Córdoba, have created alternative secondary schools that share some features with the RS (such as targeting out of school young people and having a more flexible academic organisation) (Terigi, Toscano, and Briscioli 2012; Toscano et al. 2012).
6. Despite this, research shows that there have been different tides of massive recruitment of head teachers (they are called '*procesos de titularización masiva*'), disregarding formal employment requirements and selection procedures (Mezzadra and Bilbao 2011).

Other studies have also shown that, in specific circumstances, head teachers have been personally recruited by local educational authorities (in the City of Buenos Aires, for instance, this has been the case of the first appointed head teachers of the *Escuelas Municipales de Educación Media* (municipal schools). They were created in 1990 for young people 'in risk' in areas of the City lacking secondary schools (Más Rocha 2006).

7. From 2003 until 2007 Néstor Kirchner was president of Argentina. From 2007 onwards, his wife (Cristina Fernández de Kirchner) has been in office. These governments have deployed (although in different ways and with dissimilar degrees of effectiveness) a wide range of economic policies associated with an anti-neoliberal agenda, such as the nationalization of companies and the expansion of the state's role in the economy (Diniz, Boschi, and Gaitán 2012; Wylde 2012).
8. For instance, Tenti Fanfani, Frederic, and Steinberg (2009) illustrate the former and the analysis of Gluz and Moyano (2013) illustrate the latter. Tenti and colleagues argue that individual schools shape the implementation of a variety of national and provincial socio-educational programs. Gluz and Moyano (2013) examine the 'policy process of appropriation' of the *Asignación Universal por Hijo* (Universal Benefit for Children) social policy in different types of schools. They argue that teachers and head teachers upheld similar views that misrecognise the social rights of vulnerable social groups and interpret this social policy as a strategy to satisfy students' basic needs and/or as a government's strategy to control excluded groups.
9. For instance, the office in charge of giving parents and pupils information on secondary schooling in the City had repeatedly misinformed pupils with regard to the RS 'A'. According to its head teacher, many youngsters who visited the school thought that it was an 'adult school'. Another example is the lack of clear information on this type of school on the City's official web sites.
10. In ordinary secondary schools, pupils have to apply for a bursary – which is given on the basis of family income levels.
11. In ordinary secondary schools, the great majority of teachers are paid for delivered lessons or teaching time. Only a few are paid for non-contact teaching time, such as the case of form class tutors. Furthermore, the majority of the teachers are peripatetic staff who are not attached to any particular school. This has been identified as a major pedagogic and institutional problem. In the City of Buenos Aires, Law No. 2905 was passed in 2008 establishing a 'Regulatory framework for Teaching Posts' (*Régimen de Profesor por Cargo*). This new regime aims at transforming teachers' jobs into part time or full time jobs in one school. This implies a major transformation of working teaching conditions that is still under way.
12. This is also the case in the rest of the secondary schools.
13. In the City of Buenos Aires, the great majority of state secondary schools operate in double or triple shifts.
14. At the time of fieldwork, several male pupils were living in collective residences run by professional football clubs. They had recently migrated to the City. These clubs paid for their living expenses while assessing if they were suitable for recruitment.
15. Other aspects are regulated by normative frameworks similar to those of ordinary secondary schools (such as the *Estatuto del Docente – Ordenanza* 40.593 and *Decretos reglamentarios*).
16. According to interviewed head teachers and school inspectors, this set of policy texts only offered general guidelines. After creating the schools, different type of administrative, curricular and social problems emerged and 'solutions' were 'found', whether collectively or individually – especially by head teachers at school level.
17. Bowe, Ball, and Gold (1992) distinguishes two categories of policies: writerly and readerly. The former refers to those policies that open up spaces for interpretation. The latter are more prescriptive and narrow the available interpretative options.
18. *Sectores populares* is a term used by academic and non-academic literature that refers to diverse urban social groups, such as the working class, the urban marginal, and the petty bourgeoisie (Roldán 2008).

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19. A national and a provincial socio-educational program fosters the introduction of 'pedagogic partnerships' (*parejas pedagógicas*) as an innovative pedagogic solution to pupils' learning and behavioural problems.
20. It is possible to trace back its first rupture to the 1980s with the elimination of academic entrance exams to secondary schools.
21. The 'inclusive' discursive formation is also reflected in: (1) new institutional arrangements such as the creation of alternative types of schools to 'traditional' ones, and national and local socio-educational programs aiming at altering traditional pedagogic methods and schools' individualistic approach to educational engagement and behaviour; (2) the configuration of non-traditional teachers' pedagogic identities centred around affect, care and the recognition of students' social circumstances as central aspects of teaching and learning (author's reference); and, (3) the emergence of educational and academic discourses in favour of the consolidation of an 'inclusive' secondary schooling (Terigi 2009; Tiramonti et al. 2007; Toscano et al. 2012).

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