

Extended Abstract

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Uncertainty and work: A comparative study of labor insecurity and educational achievement In Mexico and Argentina

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to ask whether increasing labor insecurity in local labor markets of Latin America have produced a fundamental shift in social inequality structure of the region. The aim objective is to examine how relationship between job insecurity and inequality is filtered by educational achievement in different countries. Central hypothesis is that the impact of labor insecurity on social inequality is experimented and filtered differently in Mexico and Argentina, due to institutional and educational differences. Nevertheless, welfare regimes, works organizations, families systems and workers trajectories also modulated the force of labor insecurity on social inequality structure.

1. Description of the topic to be studied

a. Preceding and Justification

During last three decades global labor markets has suffer from deep transformations in its composition as in its dynamics. Economy internationalization, mainly, has changed not only the kind but also the nature of labor relations given rise, between others, to the emergency of a new type of work: all that is not full time, not protected, not regular, not even salaried work. Nowadays, the idea of an existence surrounded by social security systems it is cast doubts on not only in historical vulnerable societies such Latin America but also in societies characterized by a reasonable handling of social risks.

Under this premise, the main objective of the paper is to analyze the bonds between exclusion risk and social inequality in the specific field of Latin America labor markets. From the assumption that risk is the great characteristic of modern societies, the central question to ask here is if the generalized and extended increase of labor insecurity is changing social inequality patterns of the region. We want to know if we are been witnesses of a new kind of social inequality or if, actually, changes represent a simple update of historical and durable asymmetries of Latin America, especially in terms of educational achievements .

If the common point of view in contingency literacy is social risks have been generalized and extended by all the occupational structure we could reasonably thought risk as a reduction gear of inequalities. Configuration of risk really comprises of intra categorical inequalities based on educational differences? Or a new kind of social category is being generated between those with permanent possibilities of exclusion and those with a relatively assured standard of life because of their level of education? How can we understand this relation between risk and inequality in the specific historical context of Latin America, characterized by structural heterogeneity? How a certain educational system regulates the impact of the exclusion on inequality?

Changes associated with the work world in Latin America refer to different historical references that became our starting point of the project: the consolidation of a new development and accumulation pattern and the process of stabilization and adjustment deepened since nineties decade.

During last years lot of studies have tried to explain de impacts and consequences of those transformations in the social word in general, and in the labor markets in particular. The debate on informality, new marginality, social exclusion, vulnerability or precariousness gives account of it. Main hypothesis of those studies is that these transformations expressed in a

fundamental modification at the social inclusion process by means of precariousness and individualization work process; it started to talk about “new” inequalities in the labor word and a genuine interest arose by uncertainty and risks studies instead of classic problems of social life as poverty or structural inequalities. Nevertheless, repercussions of labor insecurity in social inequality field of Latin America have been little studied.

b. Objectives

Our main research questions center around three primary interests: an interest in how economic restructuring may be increasing labor uncertainty, how local markets and their particular bundles of policies and educative credentials may affect the impact of social exclusion risk on individual life courses, and how inequalities are played out in various societies under these changing conditions.

The specific objectives of the paper are the following ones:

1. To identify what kind of different levels and arrangements of labor insecurity can be shown in each selected labor market given rise to specific models of social exclusion risks associated with educational achievements.
2. To analyze how institutional, economics and educational contexts affect and modulate the impact of labor insecurity on life course workers and on social inequality structure of the region.
3. To specify what relative weight acquires institutional, organizational and educational factors on labor insecurity since the welfare regime under which it operates.
4. To explain how labor insecurity is experimented in diverse educational contexts with singular arrangements which modulate it on different ways.
5. To disentangle what kind of answers generated workers to face uncertainty in labor word having into account their own expectative, their socio demography conditions and their immediate security core.

c. Theoretical Focus

In order to develop these objectives we left from some basic premises which are going to constitute our theoretical framework:

- Labor insecurity can be studied, at least, from three different level of analysis: a contextual level –macro or national-, an organizational level –meso or firm level- and an individual level.
- Labor insecurity has, at least, two dimensions: one objective dimension and one subjective dimension.
- Labor insecurity *is pronounced in* different levels (grades) and types *according to*: labor market context –institutional and educational field-, work organization, workers trajectories and their own expectative.

2. Research Methodology (data and methods)

The analytical scheme of the project suppose to have into account a comparative analysis at contextual level –given by path dependence institutional and culture differences between countries, at organizational level –given by differences in size, kind and firm sector-and at individual level –given by differences in educational achievements, life course stage and gender.

Our comparative analyses include two countries of Latin America from two different welfare regimes and educative credentials system: Argentina, which represents the liberal regime and Mexico as an example of family- oriented regime.

In each country, the analysis will take place in two cities typical from those regimes: Rosario in Argentina and Monterrey en México. Both selected cities have common features in a comparable sense but with economic restructuring results completely different. Both are non central urban markets that before changes in development models were regions hundred percent industrialized (with all security mechanisms implied). After structural changes, while in Monterrey industrialization was accentuated with a great intensification of tertiary sector, in Rosario the final result was the city of Argentina with highest unemployment level and a very weak and polarized tertiary sector. Besides, the general educational level of labor force in Rosario is much higher than in Monterrey.

The comparative perspective is fundamental to analyze the effects on inequality *of different labor relations patterns in each case*. Methodological homogeneity will be guaranteed by the same occupational groups selected in each context.

To generate necessary information it will be used as primary source a probabilistic longitudinal own survey (Retrospective Local Survey of Labor Insecurity and Social Inequality) that allows us to make statistical inferences in each context to be able to respond specific objectives 1, 2 y 3. Besides, we are going to select twenty typical cases of insecurity labor from the survey in each city to apply “in deep interview” and reconstruct labor trajectories in its symbolical dimensions. These second primary source of qualitative information allow us to generate information to respond specific objectives 4 y 5.

Our intention to strive for empirical evidence to distinguish the impact of labor insecurity on life courses workers in these inequalities societies led to the use of individual-based event history data and longitudinal analytical methods and techniques. Statistical applications include factor analysis to construct insecurity index and logistic and Cox semi-parametric proportional hazard models. Life course and path dependence technical analysis would be the most appropriate to process information originated by this kind of data source.

3. Some expected findings

Contemporary social debate is trying to reframe the process of construction of social inequalities based on educational achievements. By taking critical distance from the studies on social stratification, these new glances point out general explanations about the mechanisms of social inequality from economic transformations of last years. Of the main exponents of these new perspectives, some defend the predominance of historical inequalities in the labor markets while others favor the emergence of a new kind of social differentiations. How can we think this central contemporary social debate in the frame of historically unequal societies as Latin America from cultural and economic changes associated with new development pattern? Why some regions were successful when adopting development changes and others were severe failures in risks and inequality terms, despite of their high levels of education?

In our context, the complementary of these glances about social inequality implies two hypotheses to explore. First, labor markets of the region show an increase of intra categorical heterogeneity from diverse dimensions of social risk as a new distinction beyond historical social categories which have divided the labor world. At second place, this innovative principle of differentiation not necessary falls on individual educational distinctions –despite of been intra categorical- but risk and insecurity categories are historically and socially constructed with new criterions of social organization, beyond educative credentials.

The recognition of the complex and multidimensional character of inequality is an important stating point to understand Latin America context. Our proposal to introduce social risk as a dynamic element in the process of generation and reproduction of work –as a new resource to

be distributed- gives greater force and innovation to this critical discussion in our region. Risk, as a product derived from a specific historical process of capital accumulation in Latin America, is unequally distributed in different culture frames with relative weights according to social organization scheme of each society.

Social exclusion risk breaks with historical socio demography Latin America categorization between formal and informal work and, also, fragments the internal categorization of regular and non regular work between salaried workers from deregulation and flexibility process. Social risk is generating new process of categorization and connection of social inequalities because it is producing equal categories historically different (by different levels of education) and dynamics distinctions inside occupational categories with relative independence from its educational achievements, at the same time. It is about this new innovative process of exclusion and inequality in Latin America that we are going to research in this paper.

3.1 Selected theoretical Bibliography

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