



**Programs for rural education in the north of the province of Entre Ríos
(Argentina, 1978-2018)^{1 2}**

Programas para la educación rural en el norte de la provincia de Entre Ríos
(Argentina, 1978-2018)

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Abstract

The article aims to examine the changes and permanencies as well as the coexistence and overlaps between the main programs oriented to rural education that were implemented in the Argentine province of Entre Ríos and especially in the north, during four decades during which different governments, both dictatorial and democratic, succeeded each other (1978-2018). For this purpose, we consulted national and provincial regulations, documents and records prepared within the framework of the different programs studied, as well as recovering interviews and part of the previous ethnographic field work. Throughout the work, we distinguished five programs that, to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the case, have been overlapping both in terms of the start and end times, as well as the actors who participated in them. We showed that their fundamental objectives and their organization have been built in an articulated way.

Key words: Public Policies. Rural Education. Entre Ríos.

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Resumen

El artículo se propone examinar los cambios y las permanencias así como las coexistencias y superposiciones entre los principales programas orientados a la educación rural que se implementaron en la provincia argentina de Entre Ríos y especialmente en el norte, a lo largo de cuatro décadas durante las que se sucedieron diferentes gobiernos, tanto dictatoriales como democráticos (1978-2018). Para ello consultamos normativas nacionales y provinciales, documentos y registros elaborados en el marco de los diferentes programas estudiados, así como también recuperaremos entrevistas y parte del trabajo de campo etnográfico de una investigación previa. A lo largo del trabajo distinguimos cinco programas que en mayor o menor medida, según los casos, han estado superpuestos tanto en lo que respecta a los momentos de inicio y cierre, como a los actores que participaron en los mismos. Mostramos que sus objetivos fundamentales y su organización han sido contruidos de manera articulada.

Palabras clave: Políticas Públicas. Educación Rural. Entre Ríos.

Resumo

O artigo se propõe a examinar as mudanças e permanências, bem como a convivência e sobreposição entre os principais programas de educação rural implementados na província argentina de Entre Ríos e especialmente no norte, ao longo de quatro décadas que diferentes governos seguiram, tanto ditatoriais quanto democráticos (1978-2018). Para isso, consultamos regulamentos, documentos e registros nacionais e provinciais elaborados no âmbito dos diferentes programas estudados, bem como recuperamos entrevistas e parte do trabalho etnográfico anterior. Ao longo do trabalho, distinguimos cinco programas que, em maior ou menor grau, dependendo do caso, foram sobrepostos em relação aos horários de início e término e aos atores que participaram deles. Demonstramos que seus objetivos fundamentais e sua organização foram articulados.

Palavras-chave: Políticas Públicas. Educação Rural. Entre Ríos.

Introduction³

In 1978, the IDB granted the argentinian government a loan to for the implementation of the first program designed to address the rural population's education in Argentina, which was called *Programa de Expansión y Mejoramiento de la Educación Rural* (Rural Education Expansion and Improvement Program), EMER for its acronym in Spanish (Jacinto y Caillods, 2006). This program, along with another one called *Programa de Expansión y Mejoramiento de la Enseñanza Técnico-Agropecuaria* (Expansion and Improvement Program for Technical⁴ Agricultural Education), EMETA for its acronym in Spanish, laid the groundwork for the implementation of future programs aimed at expanding education in rural contexts (Jacinto y Golzman, 2006). Considering that, forty years later, a project called *Proyecto de Mejoramiento de la Educación Rural* (Rural Education Improvement Project, PROMER for its acronym in Spanish) is currently operating as the main public policy aimed at ensuring education in rural areas, we ask ourselves about the progress of educational programs for rural development being implemented in the province of Entre Rios through those 40 years, from the basic studies of EMER to the implementation of PROMER.

For this article, general investigations on educational programs were surveyed (Jacinto y Caillods, 2006; Jacinto y Golzman, 2006), along with studies addressing specific programs, such as EMER (Jorge Navarro, 2015, Petitti, 2020a y b), EMETA (Cragolino, 2000; Gutiérrez 2012; Leguizamón 2013; Leguizamón y Jorge Navarro, 2013; Plencovich, 2013; Gutiérrez, Jorge Navarro y de Marco, 2014; Frankowski, Romero y Osorio, 2019) and PROMER (Olmos y Palladino, 2019; Schmuck, 2020; González et al., 2015; Novomisky e Iñiguez, 2015; Brumat, 2011; Yentel, 2011). In the case of Entre Rios, the investigation of Mayer and Vlasic (2016) on the analysis of organizational models aimed at expanding compulsory education in rural areas was also included.

Considering these investigations, the aim of this article is to study not only the changes and continuities, but also the coexistences and overlappings between the main rural education oriented programs implemented in Entre Rios, especially in the north of the province, throughout 40 years or more, during which there was a succession of different kind of governments, both democratic and dictatorial. These programs are the national programs EMER, EMETA, the *Proyecto 7 del Programa Social Educativo* (Project 7 of the Educational Social Program, PSE for its acronym in Spanish) and PROMER, which have received external financing –except for *Proyecto 7*. Furthermore, the province's project *Integración de Escuelas Rurales* (Rural schools' Integration Project, IER for its acronym in Spanish) will also be considered. This project was the base for a program that had the aim of extending the EMER and EMETA projects to the whole province, but it failed to be fulfilled.

In order to analyze the articulation between the programs, it is possible to follow Aguilar's (1992) conception of the stages of public policies for the study of rural education programs, which can "surpass and overlap" each other, "concentrate" among one of them, "anticipate, repeat itself or be delayed". As well as it is not correct to "divide policy development in different sections" (Aguilar, 1992: 15), to study rural education programs separately can carry the risk of not noticing the complexity of the relations between them.

In a previous work, it has been noticed that there are differences between the statements of different members of EMER according to the point of beginning and ending of the program. This can be related to the fact that it had different institutional dependencies; it progressed at different

³ In order to lighten the writing process, we will use the generic masculine, with the understanding that it always includes both men and women.

⁴Translator's Note: related to agro-technical schools, secondary level institutions aimed at training students in technical abilities, vocationally oriented, so they can enter in the jobs and activities provided by rural spaces.

rates, not only in each department, but also in each centralized group; and that its beginning cannot be associated with the period of the military dictatorship (Petitti, 2020a). However, it is also possible to associate these imprecisions to the overlapping between programs.

EMER was implemented in four departments in the north of Entre Ríos – Feliciano, La Paz, Federal and Federación –, which, from that moment on, attracted other rural development programs.⁵ The north has been considered a peripheral area in the agroexport model of economy by different analysts along the 20th century (Brasky y Pucciarelli, 1997). There is a predominance of soil that is not suitable for agricultural activities, causing a restriction of possible crops and/or requiring careful handling (Engler, 2008) and there is a significantly less amount of highways and asphalted roads than in the rest of the province. In terms of population, these departments are, among the 17 departments in the political and administrative division of the province, the ones which have less grown in between-census periods 2001/2010 and have a larger rural population percentage⁶. Moreover, they have a high rate of Unsatisfied Basic Needs⁷ and in terms of illiteracy rates, some cases almost doubled the average established in the province: La Paz 4.1 %, Feliciano 4.2% and Federal 4.8%, while Federación had 2.6%.

In order to complete this article, several regulations of the province and also national were surveyed, along with documents and records developed for the different programs being studied, found in the *Archivo Histórico de Entre Ríos* (Entre Ríos Historical Archive), the *Archivo del Consejo General de Educación de Entre Ríos* (the archive of the General Council of Education of Entre Ríos, CGE for its acronym in Spanish), the *Centro de Documentación del CGE* (CGE's Documentation Centre), and the *Centro de Documentación de la Biblioteca Nacional del Maestro* (National Teacher's Library's Documentation Centre).

Programa de Expansión y Mejoramiento de la Educación Rural (Rural Education Expansion and Improvement Program)

Since the implementation of Alliance for Progress, rural areas in Latin America have become beneficiaries of rural development programs, while the model of developmentalism postulated that it was “essential for all society members to reach a certain educational level to ensure its economic development” (Cragolino 2000: 180). Thereafter, external financing loans became of great importance and, as Estrada Alvarez noted, the combination of the IDB and the modern economic development ideal “was conceived as a device used to contain the communist, socialist and progressive pressures characteristic of Latin America after the Second World War” (2009:12). In 1976, under these influences, the first seminar on financial alternatives for programs and projects directed to Latin America's new educational priorities⁸ was held in Washington DC.

⁵ We can mention the *Programa de Desarrollo del centro-norte y Plan de Reactivación Económica del Norte Entrerriano* in 1983, the *Programa Bases para el Desarrollo Sustentable del Norte Entrerriano* in 1994 and the *Proyecto de Desarrollo centro-norte* in charge of the *Subsecretaría de Asuntos Agrario*, INTA and the *Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación para la Agricultura* in 1995. Moreover, a report produced by the government of the province in 2016 states that this is the region with “less development of the province” so it can be considered to receive future investments.

⁶ By 2010, the percentage of rural population in the province was 14.3%, while in the department of Federación rose up to 18%, in La Paz to a 21%, in Federal to a 27% and in Feliciano to a 32%.

⁷ According to the National Census conducted in 2010, these departments had the highest rates of the province (8,4%), with the exception of Islas del Ibicuy (19%): Federación had a 10%, La Paz and Federal a 12% and Feliciano a 16% (INDEC, 2010).

⁸ Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo *Alternativas financieras para las prioridades educativas de América Latina* San José de Costa Rica, 1980.

Two years later, in the course of a military dictatorship government (1976-1983) and, simultaneously, with the transference of primary and pre-primary institutions to the provinces⁹, the IDB granted the national government a 50 million USD loan which, together with a similar amount provided by the nation, enabled the creation of the *Programa de Expansión y Mejoramiento de la Educación Rural* (Rural Education Expansion and Improvement Project), known as EMER for its acronym in Spanish. Initially, its objective was the elimination of “*escuelas rancho*”.^{10 11} During its implementation, new aims were included which went beyond the building concerns and focused on providing an educational service appropriate for the regional characteristics, increasing the current retention rate, reducing repetition, dropout and desertion rates. In addition, it was intended to provide vocational guidance to the senior students and, eventually, to the adult members of the community in order to encourage the population to develop an attachment to the area; and to improve the standard of living of inhabitants and communities within its reach¹².

Between 1979 and 1983, agreements with all the provinces were signed, except for Buenos Aires and *Territorio Nacional de Tierra del Fuego, Antártida e Islas del Atlántico Sur*¹³. The national coordination and administration was in charge of a Central Executive Unit called *Unidad Ejecutora Central* (UEC for its acronym in Spanish) The UEC was run by the *Ministerio de Cultura y Educación* (Education and Culture Ministry) which was responsible for the research’s assessment that helped to endorse the application for the loan, served as coordinator program’s resources administration and its execution and established links with the *Unidades Ejecutoras Provinciales* (Executive Units from the provinces, UEP for its acronym in Spanish), in charge of the local administration and implementation. The UEP were decentralized bodies with Undersecretary of State hierarchy and they were composed of a coordinator appointed by the Executive Power, a legal adviser, a secretary and four areas: Education, Infrastructure and Equipment, Administrative-Accountable, Monitoring and Assessment.

In order to obtain the money, which was not refundable, perfectibility and feasibility studies had to be done by the provinces to decide which departments and schools were to be included. The proposition had to be evaluated by the UEC and the IDB but the resources used to carry out the studies and the proposition had to be provided by the provinces. In Entre Ríos, this was achieved by the use of the vehicles and personnel of the *Consejo Provincial de la Región de Salto Grande del Gobierno de Entre Ríos* (Entre Ríos’ Government Council of the Area of Salto Grande, COPRESAG for its acronym in Spanish). COPRESAG was created in April 1976 to build and relocate the population of Federación as a result of the flood produced there to build Salto Grande’s dam (Catullo, 2006: 214). The links between IDB and COPRESAG had started in 1972 when it awarded Argentina and Uruguay 80 million USD to build the hydroelectric power station of Salto Grande, which was the largest loan given by the IDB by that time (Bouzas y Knaack, 2009).

⁹ This refers to the passing of the laws 21.809 and 21.810 which transferred educational services from the *Consejo Nacional de Educación* to the Municipality of the city of Buenos Aires, to the *Territorio Nacional de la Tierra del Fuego, Antártida e Islas del Atlántico Sur* and the provinces. More than 6.500 pre-primary and primary schools, supervisors and classification boards were transferred.

¹⁰ “Tres préstamos BID a nuestro país” *El Diario*, 17/4/78, p. 1 y *El Diario*, 12/7/78, p. 3.

¹¹T/N: Taken from the concept *rancho* which are precarious, poor and temporary constructions It refers to rural schools with severe infrastructure problems that need funding.

¹² Provincia de Entre Ríos. Unidad Ejecutora Provincial. Programa EMER. Puesta en marcha de la modalidad nuclearizada, 1987.

¹³ Consejo Federal de Cultura y Educación. Secretaría Permanente. Capítulo 1. Resoluciones y recomendaciones aprobadas. Buenos Aires, octubre de 1983 Memoria del Consejo Federal de Educación 1976-1983.

According to the IDB eligibility criteria, the selection of the departments or districts considered in each province was made according to the scale of rural population at school age, accessibility of the area to "major rural population concentration in its respective areas of influence" and the source of "the lowest socio-economic levels of the province". On the other hand, it was necessary to evidence the compatibility of the project with other socio-economic development projects¹⁴. As it has been mentioned before, the departments selected were the ones in the north –Feliciano, Federal, La Paz y Federación– which, mostly the initial three, possessed high rurality, illiteracy and school desertion rates and, particularly Federación, had been linked to COPRESAG. Among the 210 rural schools present in the four departments, more than the half were selected and included. Nevertheless, there had been other propositions –like the cases of the south part of the department Islas del Ibicuy, with the highest rurality and illiteracy rates of the province, and the department of Villaguay– which would be added to other centralisation projects in the future.

In 1981, once the province project was approved, Entre Ríos started receiving the resources necessary to start the program for 6.3 million USD. Resources were structured into two large components. The infrastructure and equipment area received the largest share (89%), and was destined to the construction and reparation of school buildings, acquisition of vehicles to perform the centralisation and the purchase of equipment and supplies. The remaining (11%) was destined to teachers training and curricular revision.

The connection between EMER and COPRESAG continued at least until December 1983. During that period, EMER and COPRESAG's UEP issued several resolutions demanding its personnel to fulfill tasks in both divisions¹⁵. Moreover, except for the education area, the three remaining areas in the UEP –Infrastructure and Equipment, Administrative-Accountable, Monitoring and Assessment– were integrated by COPRESAG personnel¹⁶. This means that, though it was the first program designed and implemented to address rural population in Argentina, it was built upon the existing base of a Council developed for Federación's program of relocation for the construction of Salto Grande dam, which received funding from DIB.

First activities performed between 1981 and 1984 were linked to investigation, further training for teachers and curricular revision. The return to democracy under the rule of Sergio Montiel (1983-1987), member of the UCR Party, introduced changes in the UEP direction of EMER. However, most of the personnel belonging to the education area continued working, which caused some friction with the people who entered the CGE after the return of democracy (Petitti, 2020b).

Between 1984 and 1987 the construction of buildings and equipment started in the previous period were finally implemented, and in 1987 the centralisation started to be implemented. This process consisted in the organization of centralised groups, each of them composed of a central school –capable of offering educational services to its students and other school's students– and a number of satellite schools at a certain distance which attended the central school once or twice a week, in a vehicle bought for that purpose, to take part in Vocational Workshops¹⁷. The EMER in Entre Ríos consisted of 20 centralised groups that covered 114 schools.

¹⁴ Consejo Federal de Cultura y Educación. Secretaría Permanente. Capítulo 1. Resoluciones y recomendaciones aprobadas. Buenos Aires, octubre de 1983 Memoria del Consejo Federal de Educación 1976-1983.

¹⁵ See "Firmase un Convenio sobre extensión y mejoramiento de la educación rural." *El Diario*, 12/8/80 p. 6 and Gobierno de Entre Ríos. UEP Programa EMER. *Resoluciones EMER* 1983. From the 33 contracts carried out for the provision of services with funding from the province, 21 were simultaneously providing services for COPRESAG.

¹⁶ Gobierno de Entre Ríos. UEP Programa EMER. *Resoluciones EMER* 1983.

¹⁷ Vocational Workshops included electricity, welding and carpentry classes for men and home art –cutting and sewing, gastronomy– classes for women; an agricultural area –vegetable gardening, gardening, small green

Programa de Expansión y Mejoramiento de la Enseñanza Técnico-Agropecuaria (Expansion and Improvement Program for Technical Agricultural Education)

In June 1983, while EMER was still developing, a new IDB loan of 78.5 million USD was received and, together with a 54.9 million provided by the nation, was used to finance EMETA. Although its early stages, such as the agreements negotiation, occurred during the military dictatorship government, it was only implemented once the democratic government came to power.

EMETA's aim was to encourage changes in formal and non-formal education directed to the agricultural sector. Even though it was conceived to include 30 institutions, this proposition was developed in 47 schools and 244 non-formal education centres, located in 22 provinces and in 3 universities¹⁸. Non-formal education involved, on the one hand, actions developed from the link between the technical agricultural school¹⁹ and rural primary schools; and, on the other hand, the development of specific training and small-scale enterprises outside and inside the school.

By the end of 1984, in Entre Ríos, the CGE hadn't yet accomplished the studies needed to define the areas of the province where schools were to be located and to present the project to EMETA's UEC. In order to obtain financing for the province, the CGE management decided to declare the creation of EMETA of public interest and to request the administrative support of the coordination of EMER's UEP for guidelines compliance²⁰. In July 1986, when the financing destined to EMER in the province had been completed and it was necessary to collect national funds remnants and items from the general revenues of the province's budget to implement the remaining actions, the creation of the EMER-EMETA UEP was proclaimed and EMER became a part of EMETA.²¹

In March 1987, EMER came under the jurisdiction of the CGE. It was established that CGE, by teaching directorate and departmental directorates of the included departments, would gradually include EMER's actions in its operating structures to expand this modality to other rural schools.²² The UEC approved the EMETA project and Entre Ríos received 5.5 non-refundable million USD to implement it. As well as EMER, resources were structured into two large components, the 94% was destined to the infrastructure and equipment area, and the remaining 6% was destined to institutional development. One of the people in charge of the program in the nation states that:

The program EMETA was a struggle, in the sense that it has always been thought as an equipment and infrastructure program and the educational part was treated as something minor. We wanted to consider the educational part as a central part and it was a real struggle because it meant to go against the huge investments. The program's biggest share [...] was the funding destined to construction and equipment; the remainings were destined, hopefully, to training, so to speak. Some buildings were actually built, because there were political agreements

housing and small animal rearing classes– and an artistic-expressive area –music and physical education classes. T/N: Workshops aimed at providing students a contact with possible jobs so they could learn some related abilities

¹⁸ Consejo Federal de Cultura y Educación. Secretaría Permanente. Memorias años 1976-1983, Buenos Aires, octubre 1983.

¹⁹ T/N: agro-technical schools are secondary level institutions aimed at training students in technical abilities, vocationally oriented, so they can enter in the jobs and activities provided by rural spaces.

²⁰ Poder Ejecutivo, Entre Ríos, Decreto 4424/84

²¹ Poder Ejecutivo, Entre Ríos, Decreto 3158/86 y Poder Ejecutivo, Entre Ríos Decreto 485/87.

²² Poder Ejecutivo, Entre Ríos, Decreto 1399/87.

between the national government and the government of the province. So they would decide to make a gigantic construction in Humahuaca without checking if there were any kids there to attend the school (Interview with a member of EMETA at a national level)

In November, coinciding with Jorge Busti from the Justicialist Party being elected as a governor for the first time (1987-1991), the regulations of the UEP of EMETA program were approved and implemented²³. Thus, EMETA in Entre Ríos was implemented and managed by the UEP, a decentralized agency run by the *Ministerio de Gobierno, Justicia y Educación* (Government, Justice and Education Ministry) which operated together with the CGE and the undersecretary of *Asuntos Agrarios* (Agricultural Affairs). In 1988, baseline studies were conducted in the four areas targeted for the program, with the direct participation of the people involved in the education process. By the end of 1988, the Executive Power of the province established the *Comisión Integradora para la Educación Agropecuaria* (Integrated Commission on Agricultural Education, CIPEA for its acronym in Spanish) constituted by the Ministerial Secretary of Agricultural Affairs, the President of CGE and the Executive Coordinator of EMER-EMETA programs. The UEP of EMETA, along with the *Unidad de Seguimiento y Evaluación* (Monitoring and Assessment Unit) of EMER, developed in 1988, were both run by CIPEA.

EMETA expanded the geographical reach of EMER. Not only included the departments of La Paz, Feliciano, Federal and Federación, but also added the departments of Villaguay and Concordia, spreading to the north centre of the province. The base agro-technical schools were four and were located in the departments of Villaguay, Concordia, La Paz and Federación. Each one of them was linked to two agro-technical schools and four primary rural schools. As a result of the addition of non-formal education centres, the departments of Colon, Rosario del Tala and Paraná were also added to EMETA.

This program was based on the interrelationship between education, work and production. Its spirit was about working in coordination with all public and private institutions related in one way or another to its objectives and to the general rural community. In Entre Ríos, the aim of EMETA was to improve the agricultural education subsystem of the province and, to that end, its purpose was to assist in the training of larger numbers of agricultural technicians²⁴ and secondary education technical teaching assistants²⁵ to answer the rural areas requirements; to diversify the agricultural sector educational offerings, adapting them to the province's development needs; to broaden the reach of upper level agro-technical education including socioeconomically disadvantaged groups; to encourage non-formal education and to provide technical services to the agricultural sector of the school's area of influence.²⁶ During the implementation of such actions, the aims broadened. Thus, base agro-technical schools not only were offering training courses, but also became appropriate discussion places where the people in the community could develop social action projects.

²³ Poder Ejecutivo, Entre Ríos, Decreto 5488/87 que crea la Unidad Ejecutora Provincial del Programa EMETA y Decreto 7489/87 que deroga al anterior.

²⁴ T/N: former students who finished their studies in agro-technical schools.

²⁵ T/N: former students who finished their studies in schools that include agro-technical education but are not agro-technical schools.

²⁶ Provincia de Entre Ríos. Proyecto de Expansión y Mejoramiento de la Educación Técnico Agropecuaria, s/f; Provincia de Entre Ríos. UEP. EMETA. Propuesta de Diseño Curricular para el Subsistema de Educación Agrotécnica, s/f.

The project *Integración de Escuelas Rurales* (Rural schools' Integration Project, IER for its acronym in Spanish), and the intention of extending centralisation to the whole province.

The IER Project was conceived in 1988, on the basis of the Central Project of Decentralisation and Regionalisation. As stated by the official documents, rural schools' integration began "as the possibility of starting a decentralisation and regionalisation process of the educational system in the province through micro-planning, democratisation of educational relationships and the community's participation".²⁷

According to the people involved in the project, this experience was based on the educational communities' requirements and in the coordinator's work of encouraging the overcoming of students isolation, and the poor development of aesthetic and expressive areas in schools with only one or reduced personnel and schools which did not have the post for a teacher in that area. Also, it granted the possibility of using the community members' experiences, abilities and knowledge and the needed organized participation of parents, students, teachers and the community in the area (Interviews with head members of the IER Project, 10/30/19; 11/4/19; 11/15/19 and 01/29/20). However, in the documents produced during the program, it was stated to be a CGE's initiative.²⁸

The aim of integrating rural schools was to summon the community to reflect on the basic educational needs of the area, establish priorities, agree on the actions needed to solve problems and to conceive self-managed projects; gather and articulate human resources and material of their own and belonging to the central system and provide, from a new point of view of learning, contexts that allow the appraisal and re-creation of the area's cultural knowledge. This has been conceived as "the way of generating attachment and providing the rural population a leading and community-based role."²⁹

The IER Project started to be implemented in 1989 in the departments of Paraná and Tala and, next year, in the departments of Nogoyá, Islas and Diamante. The centralised schools met once a month, with the exception of the ones in Tala where the meetings were held every fortnight. These meetings were held either in a fixed location (schools with better facilities or schools equidistant from the rest of the group) or the place could change each time between the schools in the group. The duration of each meeting ranged from four to six hours (not including travel time), sometimes in the morning and the afternoon. The schedule, place and duration of the meetings were determined by each group.

The centralization in the project was seen as a way of organizing schools based on the association of schools of a particular area through an institutional network to achieve the goal of teaching qualitative improvement. Thus, it enabled students to attend classes and workshops on the areas of expression and creativity, crafts, first aids, agricultural knowledge, carpentry and electricity in the course of the meetings. As it can be seen, most of these workshops were on similar areas to the ones held in EMER. Moreover, there were training activities for teachers and community development activities for parents with the participation of delegates of several municipal institutions like the police station, health centers and the government (*Junta de Gobierno*).

Although it was based on centralization and the areas of the workshops were similar to the ones in EMER, IER documents highlight certain differences. These were

²⁷ Entre Ríos. CGE. Regionalización y Descentralización. IER. Talleres Gráficos del Banco de Entre Ríos, Paraná, 1991; Entre Ríos. CGE. Regionalización y Descentralización. Manual de Competencias, Talleres Gráficos del Banco de Entre Ríos, Paraná, 1990.

²⁸ Entre Ríos. CGE. Regionalización y Descentralización. IER. Talleres Gráficos del Banco de Entre Ríos, Paraná, 1991.

²⁹ Entre Ríos. CGE. Regionalización y Descentralización. IER. Talleres Gráficos del Banco de Entre Ríos, Paraná, 1991.

the lack of external financing community proposed initiatives and that it was based in decentralization. Another difference found, though it is not included as such, is that the meetings were less regular.

As the IER was poorly resourced by the CGE, the transportation (of coordinators, monitors, artisans, teachers, children and parents), a central part of centralisation, was carried out with private vehicles. Some were borrowed from municipalities, departmental directorates, agro-technical schools and rural teachers from the institutions of the group. The municipalities or the CGE, through funds provided by the *Instituto de Seguro* of the province of Entre Ríos (Insurance Institution) refunded the money spent on fuel. One of the responsible members stated: “I destroyed two cars that belonged to my husband. The CGE paid for the fuel but if you owned a car, you had to use it” (Interview to a responsible member of IER Program, 11/4/19).

In 1999, shortly before the end of Busti’s government and the end of CGE’s control of EMER-EMETA and IER programs, responsible members of the programs developed a joint effort to expand the centralization to the whole province, both programs being presented as background records. The proposition was titled *Pre proyecto Programa de Integración de servicios educativos rurales* (Rural Educational Services Integration Program Pre Project). Its objective was to overcome the isolation of teachers and rural population by creating and maintaining communication processes that could incorporate school in the local, regional, national and global environment. This objective emerged from a national invitation to develop new projects, in which Entre Ríos decided to select the enhancement of educational offer quality for rural areas as the main line of work.³⁰

The intention of the proposal was to form a single program from IER Project and EMER-EMETA to provide rural education the most substantial elements and to institutionally “consolidate an space for political, educational and administrative answers suitable for the rural environment”. Even though the IER Project sought to be different from EMER, the pillars of the *Pre proyecto Programa de Integración de servicios educativos rurales* (Rural Educational Services Integration Program Pre Project) were deepening and expanding. On the one hand, it wanted to deepen the centralisation as an organisation and service production strategy and strengthen the lines of work of non-formal education. On the other hand, it sought to expand centralisation to those primary rural schools where self-managed activities similar to centralisation would have been started and to the rest of the agro-technical schools in the province.³¹

The Pre Project attempted to create and establish an educational offert aimed at addressing the needs of small and medium producers, since they are the pillars of the development in the area and are socially and economically marginalized from the existing organizations and from the decisions concerning the area’s development. It also emphasised the incorporation of women and rural families with running productive units placed in the area of influence of the existing primary and agro-technical schools. The technicians, rural employees, teachers, professors and rural headmasters were also targeted.

After the election of Mario Moine as governor from the Justicialist Party (1991-1995) –when the Secretary of Education, in charge of higher education institutes and middle schools transferred in 1992³², would be created– both EMER and EMETA and IER Project were no longer included in the CGE, and the responsible members were transferred

³⁰ CGE. Pre proyecto “Programa de integración de servicios educativos rurales.” Elaborado por UEP Programas EMER EMETA, Provincia de Entre Ríos, septiembre de 1992.

³¹ CGE. Pre proyecto “Programa de integración de servicios educativos rurales.” Elaborado por UEP Programas EMER EMETA, Provincia de Entre Ríos, septiembre de 1992.

³² The transfer of higher education institutes and secondary schools led to the creation, in 1991, of a Secretary of Education (Secretaría de Educación). This secretary was responsible for both levels of education but it was eliminated in 1995.

to other areas. Thus, centralisation activities continued in some schools. There are records of some centralized groups that continued the transportation of students up to June 1992, and there are particular cases in Federal and La Paz where transportation continued. In one of the departments, EMER's annual closure activities continued, at least, until 1994, and in another one, the transportation lasted until July 1998³³. Moreover, some institutions started centralisation activities with initial level education in the early 90s, which caused to extend transportation for a longer period of time. A responsible member stated that it was impossible to establish an exact time for the ending of EMER program in Entre Rios: "It is a process, it is not like a store that decides to close one day" (Interview to a responsible member from EMER's educational area).

Proyecto 7 (Project 7): EGB 3 in rural schools

During the first presidency of Carlos Menem (1989-1999) the Educational Reform was supported by loans given by the World Bank and IDB and it was deployed throughout the country with certain specifications. The Federal Education Law (*Ley Federal de Educación*), passed in 1993, extended compulsory education from 7 to 10 years. It was named *Educación General Básica* (General Basic Education, EGB for its acronym in Spanish) and it was divided into three levels of three years. In addition, in 1992, with the passing of the Transference Law (*Ley de Transferencia*), the national decentralisation project was completed by the transference of non-university educational services and middle schools to the provinces.

To make EGB3's implementation easier in rural areas and to widen the educational offer to address the area's specificities, the Project 7 of rural education-EGB3 Reinforcement was implemented. This program was a part of the *Plan Social Educativo* (Educational Social Program, PSE for its acronym in Spanish) that was in effect from 1993 to 1999 and covered a number of policies, called "compensatory", stipulated by the Federal Education Law.³⁴

PSE included all provinces, covering specially the areas of greatest needs. The targeting was wide, with the intention to reach a large number of schools and a high percentage of registered students. The majority of funding was destined to construction of school buildings and provision of books, construction works and didactic equipment for schools and students, further training for teachers, and support for local and institutional projects, among other initiatives. Similar to EMER, one of its most celebrated achievements regarding rural areas was the "eradication" of the so-called "*escuelas ranchos*". Thus, its commitment to "most deprived school population"³⁵ and its conception of rural education were similar to the ones of the IDB financed program.

Project 7 started in 1996 and by 1999 it had already covered about 24% of all rural schools in 21 provinces (Prudent y Scarfó, 2018). The national government provided investment

³³ Archivo Escuela 48, Federal, Archivo Escuela 11, La Paz y Archivo escuela 69, La Paz. In the province of Misiones some centralised groups performed activities until 2016.

³⁴Initially, the PSE was structured by two programs, *Mejor educación para todos* (Better education for everyone) and *Mejoramiento de la Infraestructura escolar* (Schools' Infrastructure Improvement). Since 1997, the *Programa Nacional de Becas* (National Scholarship Program) was incorporated, which was developed through a loan provided by the IDB (unlike the two previous programs that were developed using national budget fundings). The PSE established that the Executive Power had to finance special educational development programs that could be implemented in the different jurisdictions in order to "solve the educational emergencies, correct the balance of education in the area, face situations of marginalization or implement educational experiences of national interest". Argentina. Ley Federal de Educación N° 24.195, 1993, art N° 64.

³⁵ Argentina. Ministerio de Cultura y Educación. *Plan Social Educativo: Programa mejor educación para todos*. 1994, page 5.

costs and each province would adapt the proposition according to its strategies, priorities and available resources, and would cover running costs such as teaching appointment and peripatetic teachers' transport (Jacinto y Golzman, 2006; Prudent y Scarfó, 2018).

Under Project 7, six departments were selected in the province of Entre Ríos to conduct a pilot study between 1997 and 1998 in order to begin the creation of third level EGB. The firsts were Federal y La Paz, which had been included in EMER and in the mid-90s had centralized groups that continued the transportations. Then, Nogoyá and Paraná, which had participated in rural schools incorporation projects, were selected. Finally, Concordia and Victoria located on the coasts of Uruguay and Paraná Rivers respectively, were also added. In 1997, classes were created in order to ensure the implementation of the new level in 16 schools, and in the following year 56 more schools were incorporated.³⁶ Thus, in 1998, EGB implementation in the province's rural area reached 72 schools, 340 7th year students and 113 8th year students.³⁷ According to the institutions' selection criteria, in the hands of each of the provinces, areas with the lowest rates of Unsatisfied Basic Needs had to be privileged (Prudent y Scarfó, 2018). It's important to highlight that, in Entre Ríos, the institutions were selected by the authorities, without any consultation to the schools. Although this gave certain institutions and rural teachers unprecedented attention compared to the attention given to other rural schools, it entailed an extraordinary amount of poorly rewarded work (Celman et al., 2000).

For Project 7 implementation, the connection between rural institutions accomplished during EMER and EMETA were valued but, instead of giving priority to students transportation, the goal was to form teams integrated by a "guidance teacher"³⁸ per institution –in charge of guaranteeing the monitoring of students progress in school– and peripatetic teachers –responsible for teaching classes in specific curricular areas in different schools. In this way, *Unidades de Gestión Local* (Local Management Units, UGL for its acronym in Spanish) were created by gathering near located schools in order to work connected around a central school used as a physical and administrative reference. The person in charge of primary level's supervision and the primary school headmaster were appointed UGL representatives, now also in charge of the new level (Jacinto y Golzman, 2006). Between the options provided in Entre Ríos, there was also the possibility of implementing the third level through "movable sections", meaning that students could be moved to attend technology and English classes to a middle school where the teachers in charge of the subjects worked and from where the action for EGB school teachers in charge of third level's training and advisory were coordinated.³⁹

Project 7 implementation of EGB3 was accompanied by the distribution of teaching materials, delivered to students and teachers: the "*cuadernos de trabajo*" (textbooks and workbooks) and the "*cuadernos del docente*" (textbooks and workbooks for teachers) respectively. These materials were elaborated on the idea that "the irregular attendance of students at school (...) requires to provide independent learning skills" and, although the intention was not to replace teachers, the "independent learning involving decision-making in everyday tasks" was highly valued.⁴⁰

Projects developed during that time could be easily related to the community development activities of EMER and IER Project. Along with the incorporation of EGB3,

³⁶ Provincia de Entre Ríos, CGE Resolución 1445/97 y CGE Resolución 0080/98.

³⁷ Provincia de Entre Ríos. Informe elevado por la provincia a la Nación, 1998.

³⁸ T/N: former students who finished their studies in schools that include agro-technical education but are not agro-technical schools.

³⁹ Provincia de Entre Ríos. CGE Res. 151/99

⁴⁰ Argentina. Ministerio de Cultura y Educación. *Plan Social Educativo. Proyecto Fortalecimiento de la Educación Rural. La propuesta de enseñanza y los primeros 15 días*, page 10.

it is important to name the implementation of the *Proyectos de Calidad de Vida* (Projects of Standards of Living), related to the *Contenidos Básicos Comunes* (Common Core Contents), not included within school hours and held through the effort of guidance teachers and peripatetic teachers, who also received exercise books for the task. Among these proposals, there were school gardening, forest nursery and preservation of fruits and vegetables projects. Its aim was to incorporate “the knowledge and practices built in the history of each community and the possibility of providing the community with the knowledge acquired in school”.⁴¹

According to an investigation developed in the department of La Paz, after EMER ceased to operate by the end of the 1990s, gardening activities in primary schools were again included through the creation of different extra-curricular projects. In 1999, following the suggestions and recommendations included in the exercise books provided by the *Proyectos de Calidad de Vida* (Projects of Standards of Living), it was decided to create a vegetable garden for the school and the community. The EMER was considered as a precedent in the elaboration of the project and the institutions’ connection proposal that the centralisation process had originated. Although the proposal had to be aimed at EGB 3, it included the student population from all levels of the schools in the area. Also, as explained in the project, it was coordinated by a peripatetic teacher, in this case a Technology teacher, which had been a workshop coordinator for EMER and whose teaching position had been changed.⁴² To develop the activities, which brought together four institutions, they chose the central school because of its infrastructure and used the booklets produced for the INTA’s greenhousing program called *Programa Pro Huerta* (Schmuck, 2020). Also, one of the responsible members of EMER was involved in the *Pro Huerta* program of Entre Rios.

Furthermore, in those years the *Programa de Reforma e Inversión en el Sistema Educativo* (Educational System’s Modification and Investment Program, PRISE for its acronym in Spanish) started to gain importance. It was financed by IDB and it encouraged the development of projects aimed at community involvement and materials, equipment and infrastructure investments.⁴³ Thus, even when they were not granted under the Project 7, according to the institutions these investments were related to the program:

In 97’ and 98’ we got visitors from Paraná, we used to wonder what they would be observing. But Project 7 doesn’t come alone. Once implemented, several things come along. In 98’ an emergency room was created within the school facilities in order to cover education and healthcare (Interview with former primary rural education teacher and headmistress and former rural education directorate of CGE, 04/24/2020).

The creation of EGB3 in the whole province of Entre Rios was finally achieved in 1999 and established that the curricular designs produced in the province were

⁴¹ Argentina. Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, 1999, page 33.

⁴² This case is an example of a broader trend in which most of the workshop teachers of EMER were relocated so they could work in the schools filling teachers posts (Petitti, 2020). A PROMER and CGE employee states that “there are posts that used to belong to the instructors of the workshops in the central school which kept working after the workshops ended (...) But they couldn’t be relocated because of their acquired rights” (Interview with former teacher and headmaster of primary rural education and PROMER and CGI technician, 22/04/2020). T/N: The people employed for a specific program were given new tasks after the end of the program. Their posts were changed so they could work in the schools as teachers.

⁴³ The aim of the program was based on the “fulfillment of the objectives of the *Educación Media* reformation, whose implementation is incomplete in most of the provinces; and on the support of school populations which are at social and educational risk”. BID-Argentina. 1999

obligatory.⁴⁴ Based on the data from April 1999, EGB3 was implemented in 224 rural schools with 19 central offices and it included 2107 students (Jacinto y Golzman, 2006). Nevertheless, after the beginning of Montiel's second government (1999-2003), new modifications were introduced: in 2000, the Intermediate School (*Escuela Intermedia*⁴⁵) was created and, in 2001, the *Ley Provincial de Educación* (Education Law of the Province) was passed.⁴⁶ According to the new legislation, the Intermediate School was conceived as an independent educational unit with its own personnel and that could be located either in EGB1 and EGB2 schools, or *Escuelas Polimodales*⁴⁷ and Centre Schools of the grouping (*Escuelas Núcleo de Agrupamiento*⁴⁸) until the spaces required for its running were generated. In rural areas this meant the organization of groups to establish a central school, the Intermediate School, to receive EGB1 and EGB2 school-leavers of the area.⁴⁹ In the north departments, the organisation was based on the previously centralised groups of EMER. In order to transport students, some departments proposed to use the same vehicles and drivers of EMER, who were still employed in the institutions doing maintenance work. Also, schools that had been central schools in EMER and had better facilities were chosen for the establishment of *Polimodal* and, later, secondary schools, but the implementation was influenced by appropriation and dispute processes in rural areas, so this cannot be generalised.

These changes occurred in a context of economic, social and institutional crisis, both in the country and in the province, with long and resonant teacher's strikes, caused resistance to the project's implementation. Although Project 7's precedent in institutions resulted in many of the mechanisms and strategies developed in schools –such as the use of activity books and the continuity of *Proyectos de Calidad de Vida* – it was considered more as a continuation than an interruption. Thus, in the institutions and among teachers and school personnel who experienced these transformations, Project 7, Rural EGB3 and Intermediate Schools were seen many times as synonyms or were chronologically placed in moments that do not coincide with the programs' implementation dates or their regulations.

The *Proyecto de Mejoramiento de la Educación Rural* (Rural Education Improvement Project) for all rural schools

After the *Ley de Educación Nacional* (National Education Law), aimed at academic structure's unification and homogenization in all the country extending compulsory education to secondary school, was passed in 2006, Entre Ríos approved a new Education Law that changed the levels in the educational system and established Rural and Island Education (*Educación Rural y de Islas*), as one of the eight *modalidades* (possible orientation options) in the educational system. Even though this option was incorporated in the regular budget and in education administration (Mayer y Vlastic, 2016), most actions

⁴⁴ Provincia de Entre Ríos, CGE Resolución 2860/98.

⁴⁵ T/N: EGB3 schools

⁴⁶ At the country level, during the presidency of Fernando de la Rúa (1999-2001), the PSE was replaced for the *Programa Escuelas Prioritarias* (Priority Schools Program), which would be then replaced by the *Programa de Acciones Compensatorias en Educación* (Educational Compensatory Actions Program, PACE for its acronym in Spanish). The former addressed specifically the most vulnerable sectors of population in rural and urban areas, people with special educational needs and adults who had not completed obligatory education (Ministerio de Educación, 2000). Beyond the name changes, the programs were still based in compensatory policies which addressed socially and educationally disadvantaged populations and schools whose population were at social and educational risk (Bordegary y Novaro, 2004).

⁴⁷T/N: Non compulsory education schools where students could continue their studies after finishing EGB3.

⁴⁸T/N: The schools that were the centre of the grouping (centralised groups), generally chose because they have better infrastructure or more resources or have received more fundings.

⁴⁹ Provincia de Entre Ríos. CGE Res. 0397/00.

aimed at addressing rural education were associated with the implementation of the first *Proyecto de Mejoramiento de la Educación Rural* (Rural Education Improvement Project, PROMER I for its acronym in Spanish), and its continuation through PROMER II. A part of the program's funding was destined to the expansion of *Proyecto Horizontes* (Project Horizons), which was only partially implemented in Entre Ríos. It was developed in 2008 during the presidency of Cristina Fernández (2007-2015) and its aim was that "rural young people could study the *Ciclo Básico* (Basic Cycle/level) of compulsory Secondary Education in schools close to their places of residence, with an organisation appropriate to the local situation and the possibility of widen their frames of reference through activities with other teachers and young people from the surrounding areas".⁵⁰

PROMER I was developed with a loan destined to fund policies for all rural education levels given by the World Bank, specifically by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) for 150 million USD. It was implemented between 2007 and 2010, then extended to 2013, and its aim was to "support the national government policy in order to improve the coverage, efficiency and quality of the national educational system and to improve the management of the educational system through reinforcement of regulation, planning information, monitoring and assessment capacity at national levels and in the provinces".⁵¹ Unlike previous projects, which focused on some areas and/or aimed at a target population, the intention of PROMER I was to cover all rural schools, although some priorities were established for certain actions to ensure attention to the most isolated schools.⁵²

Groups of schools were established for its local implementation. These groups were composed of "15 schools in close geographic proximity and, if possible, converging with Primary Level's supervision area and a middle school for reference".⁵³ In continuity with the previous reviewed programs, this perspective intends to recover "the nation's and the province's experiences that can provide appropriate answers for the schools' common problems through networks, groups, local management units or other ways of collaboration between institutions".⁵⁴ As a former rural education headmistress of Entre Ríos stated,

It wasn't a group of schools gathered for no reason, but with the intention of interacting, enriching themselves, studying (...). If

⁵⁰ Argentina. Ministerio de Educación, *Cuaderno para el docente. Presentación del Proyecto Horizontes*, 2009. It was a pedagogical and didactic proposal which involved the production and usage of printed curricular development materials for students and teachers; the incorporation of multimedia resources, especially TV programs and DVDs, computers and printers; and the continuity of funding for *Proyectos Productivos de Base Local* (Productive Projects in the Local Area) that had started by the PSE proposal.

⁵¹ Ministerio de Educación de la Nación. Proyecto de Mejoramiento de la Educación Rural- Convenio de préstamo BIRF Nro.7353-AR. Manual operativo, 2007.

⁵² During PROMER I, the *Primer Relevamiento de Escuelas Rurales* (First Rural Schools Survey, RER for its acronym in Spanish) was financed. It was conducted between 2006 and 2009 with the aim of collecting information of 15.596 rural schools located in populations with less than 2000 inhabitants or in the open field. It provided georeferenced indicators relevant for the planification and assessment of the education policy.

⁵³ Ministerio de Educación de la Nación. Proyecto de Mejoramiento de la Educación Rural- Convenio de préstamo BIRF Nro.7353-AR. Manual operativo, 2007.

⁵⁴ Consejo Federal de Educación. Resolución N°128/10, page 9. This resolution on rural policies and PROMER, includes different school organization models suitable for each context "in order to provide all the offers curricular justice" and it also details the policy of grouping establishment. According to the resolution 125/2015, which details national regulations and the directives of the provinces (CGE resolution 850/2007), we can identify different organisational and pedagogic models in Entre Ríos: basic cycles placed in primary schools, basic cycles placed in primary schools that have a progressive extension towards the oriented cycle; multi-level schools, which include initial, primary and secondary levels; complete secondary schools; secondary schools with residences; institutions with multi-years in both basic and oriented cycles. *Serie estadística escuelas de nivel inicial, primario y secundario en contexto rural*. 2018. Dirección de Educación Secundaria.

there is a centralisation or a grouping, it must have primary and secondary schools, and what should be considered is the continuity, so it can be led through appropriate ways to form a connection with secondary school. This had already been done in the times of EMER, it was different but we used to meet and make teams with the schools in the group (...). It was a centralisation because it had a central school, now it is called grouping (Interview with a former primary rural education teacher and headmistress and former rural education directorate of CGE, 04/24/2020).

Among the actions performed nationally under the program, the equipment and infrastructure investments are notable: libraries, toy libraries, technological and multimedia devices, school laboratories, printed materials for students and teachers from all levels; also, construction works that helped overcoming deficiencies in essential services provided by schools, like drinking water and electricity, new classrooms and buildings (González et al, 2015). Nevertheless, in Entre Ríos, the meetings of *Fortalecimiento de la Enseñanza en las Escuelas Primarias Rurales* (Strengthening Education in Rural Primary Schools) gained importance. These took place between 2008 and 2010, and were held in four locations (Concordia, Islas del Ibicuy, Nogoyá and La Paz), with meetings every fortnight and institutions and grouping work. Therefore, there was little progress in infrastructure works during this period.

In 2015, during the presidency of Mauricio Macri from the *Cambiamos* Party (2015-2019), PROMER II was implemented in the amount of 250 million USD. Its aim was to reduce repetition rates in rural areas and to increase inscriptions and secondary school's completion rates in rural areas. The project prioritized secondary education and, for that reason, 80% of the total amount was destined to that level. Investments were to be destined to the improvement of rural schools functioning conditions – ranging from infrastructure construction works to maintenance and equipment acquisition –, strengthening the relation between schools and families; and the improvement of teaching and school management – through training actions, production and distribution of teaching materials, among others.⁵⁵ Although PROMER's formal deadline was in 2019, it was extended until the end of 2020.

Among the outstanding investments made in Entre Ríos with PROMER's resources during 2017 and 2018 we can mention the delivery of school equipment to secondary level rural schools; distribution of school furniture in more than 500 initial and primary rural schools,⁵⁶ the construction of a school in the department of Feliciano; the beginning of construction works for a secondary school and renovations in another institution, both in the department of Concordia.⁵⁷ Regarding secondary level education, it's important to highlight the *Proyectos Productivos de Base Local* (Productive Projects in the Local Area, PBL for its acronym in Spanish), aimed at *Ciclo Básico* (Basic Cycle) of secondary education, which implicate “transferring funds to schools in order to implement educational projects related to local development”⁵⁸ and its objective is to involve local people and to provide tools for. The program appeals to establish cooperative relations between the institutions and other sectors as the

⁵⁵ Argentina-BIRF, 2015. The negotiations for the continuation of the project started during the presidency of Cristina Fernandez and continued during the presidency of Macri.

⁵⁶ <http://cge.entrierios.gov.ar/educacion/informes-de-gestion/>.

⁵⁷ Provincia de Entre Ríos. Unidad Ejecutora Provincial-Boletín oficial. Resoluciones aprobadas, 2017.

⁵⁸ Argentina. Ministerio de Educación de la Nación. *Los proyectos escolares productivos de base local como estrategia de enseñanza*. Internal work document, unpublished. Available in CGE- Dirección de Educación Secundaria. 2017, page 3.

municipality, student's families, former students, governmental and non-governmental organisations, local and also from the region or the province.⁵⁹

Similar to EMER, the management of PROMER II in Entre Ríos was in charge of the *Unidad Ejecutora Provincial* (Executive Unit from the province, UEP for its acronym in Spanish), which in turn is in charge of the implementation of other projects with national and international financing. In addition to being responsible for the payment of contracts and accountability of the project, the UEP, in coordination with the CGE, acquires prominence in the development of infrastructure works and purchasing of school furniture:

In PROMER I, the CGE, was in charge of the execution of the program, but it is not its primary function, because it does not have the structure and composition needed for it. This made tendering, awarding and hiring needed for the construction works very difficult to get. In the hands of CGE, infrastructure management and implementation were unsuccessful. CGE has a planning department with access to all statistical bases and know the specific needs (...) so they decide where the construction works must be implemented and the respective need's program (Interview with UEP's Deputy Executive Coordinator, 07/08/2020)

From 2016 on, the coordination of the CGE and the UEP was in charge of the *Dirección de Educación Rural e Islas* (Rural Education and Islands Department), created to address the particularities of the institutions in such contexts.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, in November 2017, the Department was dissolved on the grounds of budgetary matters. Its functions were taken over by the directorates of Primary, Initial and Secondary Education. Several employees of CGE and PROMER stated that initial and secondary levels were "affected" by this decision:

It was in operation for a short period of time, but it had achieved remarkable communication with schools. (...) This affected mostly initial and secondary levels (...). In the Primary School Directorate there used to be a Rural Sub directorate, but after it was closed, the Primary Schools Directorate continued this specific action for rural schools. (Interview with former teacher and headmaster of primary rural education and technician of PROMER and CGE, 22/04/2020)

The person in charge of PROMER's *Proyectos Productivos de Base Local* (Productive Projects in the Local Area), implemented in the province through the action of the *Dirección de Educación Rural* (Rural Education Department),⁶¹ points out that:

⁵⁹ Argentina. Ministerio de Educación de la Nación. *Los proyectos escolares productivos de base local como estrategia de enseñanza*. Internal work document, unpublished. Available in CGE- Dirección de Educación Secundaria. 2017, page 4.

⁶⁰ Provincia de Entre Ríos. CGE Res. 026/16.

⁶¹ The antecedents of these projects are the *Proyectos Productivos de Base Local* (Productive Projects in the Local Area), financed by PROMER I, that hadn't been implemented in the province. According to the former director of Rural Education, this happened because "nobody had 'taken it' to the province" (Interview with former teacher and director of primary rural education and ex director of Rural Education of CGE, 24/04/2020)

In order to execute PBL projects, the PROMER hires people with certain profiles to work with CGE, but we do have certain autonomy⁶² (...) my function is to visit all schools and departments, that is why it is a regional post (...) The dissolution of the Directorate was really felt, the absence of a person specifically in charge of rural guidelines. Secondary schools receive the furniture sent by PROMER, but it [PBL] is the only course of action. For the general directorate [of Secondary Education of CGE], it seems like rurality is considered marginal, we are less so the needs seem fewer, like there aren't that many problems. (Interview with member of PBL-PROMER, 22/04/2020)

Since its implementation in 2016, there was a significant increase in the schools included in the PBL: in 2017 it was implemented in 37 schools and in the following year it reached the 17 departments and included 87 institutions, including 81 rural schools, two schools functioning as extensions for secondary education and four multi-year schools⁶³. Proposals implemented covered different activities, among which garden and greenhouse (23%) and jam and preserves (11.5%) were the most prominent, followed by bakery activities (9%), plant production (9%) and school newspaper (7%).⁶⁴

On the diversity of existing projects, it is interesting to mention the investigation carried out in the Department of La Paz: a secondary school decided to start a bakery enterprise, after the confirmation of the absence of that kind of production in the area. This “local” demand constituted the main reason to present the project as a local development strategy. Different activities were developed: production of bread and cakes, investigation of food properties and manufacturing processes’ design; but the most important was that students could learn how to start their own business or enterprise, considering communication and marketing strategies needed to sell a product. The main objective proposed in each stage of the process, made explicit in a report produced by the headmistress, was “preparing our students for an occupation which can provide them immediate responses”.⁶⁵ This represents a clear difference in relation to previous projects implemented in the school and the curriculum of the subjects which were included, from 2005 to 2011, in the *modalidad de Bienes y Servicios del Polimodal* (Goods and Services Modality of *Polimodal*) in the school, which were then replaced by the *terminalidad en Economía y Administración para el Ciclo Orientado* (Economics and Management Terminality for the Oriented Cycle). In these cases, “sustainable development” and “community development” were addressed, related to the incorporation of knowledge of agricultural production in the area. According to a member of PBL:

In PBL it is clearly stated that its aim is vocational training, which is a main interest for rural schools, their main concern is that children can learn something, a job (...). But then, the importance of curricular knowledge became more prominent (...). In the Directorate [of Secondary Education of CGE] they would say that that is what the technical schools are for, for vocational training, it is not our function (Interview with PBL-PROMER member, 04/24/2020).

These differences seem to have been present the implementation of the PBL in the province.

⁶² Nevertheless, in other cases the people hired for PROMER also worked for the CGE.

⁶³ T/N: the *Escuelas multiaño* were schools where different classes from different years shared some of the lessons.

⁶⁴ CGE. *PROMER II. Proyectos Productivos de Base Local – PBL*. Dirección de Educación Secundaria, 2018.

⁶⁵ La Paz. Archivo E. Secundaria-Informe PROMER, 2018

Conclusions

Rural education oriented programs implemented in Entre Ríos, particularly in the north, in the last forty years, form a combination of overlapped practices. Their main objectives and organization were built coordinately. For a brief recapitulation, in these four decades we can distinguish four national programs and one program of the province implemented in Entre Ríos: EMER, EMETA, IER, Project 7 and PROMER. These programs have been overlapped in terms of the historical moment of their implementation and of the people involved in them.

Although the IER Project was not implemented in the north of the province – since its aim was to expand centralisation to other departments of the province –, the north – an area which attracted other rural development projects – has been the privileged area for the implementation of educational programs for rural education in the province. Thus, it allowed us to study in what way the coordinated construction of the main aims and the different programs' organisation is related to the continuity of many of their members. Not only politicians but also teachers, directorates, families and drivers in charge of centralisation participated in the different proposals.

Their main objectives were related to the rural development project. Since the first programs, it was stated the importance of stopping the process of migration to the cities, the necessity of encouraging attachment, the connection of technical education with the environment and the relation with the community and the “local” region. As a backdrop, the centrality of rural education institutions as an inhabited space, socially disputed, is persistent.

From the need to eradicate “*escuelas rancho*” forward, one of the major components of rural education policies were construction and equipment investment, a sector that, as time goes by, is still an area with infrastructure deficiencies. In relation to educational projects, sometimes called “the program's educational guidelines”, EMER's concern was the connection between formal education and vocational skills or useful vocational orientation. The EMETA continued this tradition and revealed multiple possible connections between agro-technical schools, communities and the rest of educational institutions. But, in the following decades, those relations became weaker and the interrelationship between education, work and production was specifically related to technical-professional orientation⁶⁶. In the same way, the concern for settlement and attachment to the rural area was replaced since the IER project for the importance of community involvement, the interest for the “local” appears stripped from the area's economic activity in order to “collect” experiences, abilities and knowledge, together with an interest in the overcoming of isolation and the proper use of resources in a context of decentralisation politics. At the same time, the importance of educational inclusion and other indicators linked to the promotion, overcoming of over-age and graduation, valued in the PROMER assessments, started to grow.

In terms of organisation, the centralisation strategy persists in the politics' design but it is also restored and valued from the territory: in the institutions in the north of the province in which this investigation is based, the implementation of EGB3 or Intermediate Schools restores the centralisation squemes characteristic of EMER and EMETA programs, including the use and capitalisation of previous relations and resources (like transportation), most of the times thanks to the educational community's experience and its workers in the area.

On balance, having identified more continuities than changes, we have been able to follow the thread connecting the aims of the mentioned development policies through four decades. The connections between them are, sometimes, expressed in the documents we can find in the schools or explicitly evoked by teachers, directorates and families.

⁶⁶ T/N: According to current legislation, secondary schools have different orientations that students can select according to their preferences.

Other times, the connections can be tracked from the traces left between the different implemented projects or from impossibility of differentiation between the programs and their periods by the institutions and the programs' employees.

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