



**Universal and compulsory common education in the National Territories.
A mandate without sufficient resources (Argentina, 1884-1900)¹**

Educación común universal y obligatoria en los Territorios Nacionales.
Un mandato sin recursos suficientes (Argentina, 1884-1900)

Educação comum universal e obrigatória nos Territórios Nacionais.
Um mandato sem recursos suficientes (Argentina, 1884-1900)

Cecilia del Barro
IRICE/CONICET/UNR (Argentina)
<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6892-5671>
delbarro@irice-conicet.gov.ar

Abstract

The creation and building of schools in the National Territories, as well as in other jurisdictions, was one of the main requests that the National Council of Education (CNE) had to respond to by the end of the 19th century, as ensuring access to schools was necessary to demand compulsory education. Given the vast and scattered population with heterogeneous social compositions, the population requirement dictated by Law No. 1420 represented a clear contradiction with the context of application in the local governments. Schools had to be created everywhere, but the request was not aligned with the allocated resources, which, although not being scarce, were insufficient. In this paper, we propose to reconstruct the diagnoses and institutionalization that gave clarity to state policies related to the universal and compulsory schooling of common education in the National Territories (1884-1900). To this end, we use combined approach of qualitative and quantitative methodologies that allow us to carry out analyzes on different scales: microhistorical to understand the dynamics of the CNE and local experiences, and more global to describe educational policies and their relationships with social actors.

Keywords: Schooling. Primary Education. Educational Policy.

¹ English versión by author.

Resumen

La creación de escuelas y la edificación en los Territorios Nacionales, como en otras jurisdicciones, fue una de las principales demandas a las que debió responder el Consejo Nacional de Educación (CNE) a finales del siglo XIX, en tanto que para exigir la obligatoriedad escolar debe garantizarse el acceso a las mismas. Tratándose de vastas regiones, con poblaciones dispersas y con una composición social heterogénea, el requisito poblacional dictaminado por la Ley N° 1420 supuso una franca contradicción con el contexto de aplicación en las gobernaciones. Sin embargo, la escuela debía crearse por doquier, pero el mandato no se correspondía con los recursos asignados que, sin ser pocos, eran insuficientes. En este trabajo nos proponemos reconstruir los diagnósticos y la institucionalización que fueron dando nitidez a las políticas estatales vinculadas a la escolarización de la educación común universal y obligatoria en los Territorios Nacionales (1884-1900). A tal fin empleamos en forma combinada metodologías cualitativas y cuantitativas que nos permiten realizar análisis en diferentes escalas: microhistórico para comprender la dinámica del CNE y las experiencias locales, y más global para describir las políticas educativas y sus relaciones con los actores sociales.

Palabras claves: Escolarización. Enseñanza Primaria. Política Educativa.

Resumo

A criação de escolas e a construção nos territórios nacionais, assim como em outras jurisdições, foram das principais demandas às quais teve que responder o Conselho Nacional de Educação (CNE) no final do século XIX, uma vez que para exigir a escolaridade obrigatória, o acesso às escolas deve ser garantido. Para vastas regiões, com populações dispersas e com uma composição social heterogênea, o requisito populacional ditado pela Lei N.º 1420 representou uma franca contradição com o contexto de aplicação nas subdivisões administrativas. No entanto, as escolas deviam ser criadas em toda parte, mas o mandado não condizia com os recursos alocados que, embora tenham sido numerosos, eram insuficientes. O presente trabalho, propõe uma reconstrução dos diagnósticos e da institucionalização que deram nitidez às políticas estatais relacionadas com a escolarização da educação comum universal e obrigatória nos territórios nacionais (1884-1900). Para esse fim, utilizamos uma abordagem combinada de metodologias qualitativas e quantitativas que nos permitem realizar análises em diferentes escalas: micro-histórica para compreender a dinâmica do CNE e as experiências locais, e mais global para descrever as políticas educacionais e suas relações com os atores sociais.

Palavras-chave: Escolarização. Ensino Fundamental. Política Educacional.

Introduction

The establishment of schools and their construction in the National Territories, as in other jurisdictions of Argentina, was one of the main demands that the National Council of Education (CNE) had to respond to at the end of the 19th century, since ensuring access to schools is necessary to enforce compulsory education. Considering the vastness of the regions with scattered populations and heterogeneous social compositions, the possibilities for response led to the adaptation of measures. The population requirement dictated by Law No. 1420 posed a clear contradiction with the context of application in the governorships, as they were characterized by the dispersion of their inhabitants. However, schools had to be created everywhere, but the mandate did not correspond to the allocated resources, which, while not few, were insufficient.

In this article² we aim to reconstruct the diagnoses and institutionalization that gave clarity to state policies linked to the universal and compulsory common education in the National Territories (1884-1900); starting from the recognition that the approach to the expansion process of the primary education system comprises both the elaboration and sanction of laws, as well as their application and reception by social actors, in constant interaction with their social, economic, and political context. The period cut allows us to investigate the scope and initial impact of the official action exercised by the CNE following the enactment of laws that established a normative framework. The consulted sources have been the official publications of said organization, thus delimiting the scenario where the actors of the period problematized education and formulated responses to expand elementary instruction: *El Monitor de la Educación Común* (EMEC) and the CNE's annual reports to the Minister of Justice, Worship, and Public Instruction³.

Firstly, we briefly review the literature regarding education in the National Territories, which allows us to propose the hypothesis that educational policies had a relative scope. We describe the main mechanisms for gathering information as well as for its processing, which enabled the design of measures tailored to the needs of the governorships: statistics and inspection. Subsequently, we identify the policy of school creation and construction as the primary concern and challenge for the authorities. Additionally, we point out the ongoing tension between this demand and the possibilities of financing, as an indispensable requirement to substantiate the opening of schools.

National Territories and schooling

In the 1880s, following the consolidation of national territorial control by the national government, educational policy related to primary education took on new dimensions. On one hand, the assurance of dominion over the border regions to the north and south of the country allowed the progressive creation of the National Territories, later referred to interchangeably as National Governorates, which were subnational political entities of Argentina under the control of the central government. In this work, we refer to the National Territories -current provinces- of Misiones, Formosa, Chaco, La Pampa, Neuquén, Río Negro, Chubut, Santa Cruz, and Tierra del Fuego, which between the years 1884 and 1900 varied in their composition with the reincorporation of colonies into provincial jurisdictions (Villa Libertad, Colonia Caroya, and

²This work was presented at the XVIII Inter-schools/Departments of History Conference -year 2022-, in the panel "History of Argentine Education (19th and 20th centuries): State, institutions, teachers, and professors." The enrichment of that presentation, which became an article, is due to the feedback from the coordinators and the colleagues present.

³ Since 1898, the portfolio has been named the Ministry of Justice and Public Instruction.

Colonia Sampacho in 1889) and the incorporation of new regions (Los Andes in 1899). On the other hand, it is already known the argument linking intimately the process of national state formation and the educational policy of the governments of the period (BERTONI, 2001; LIONETTI, 2007; TEDESCO, 2009; MINTEGUEAGA GARABÁN, 2009).

The federal government, through the CNE, exercised direction and administration over primary schools in the Capital, Colonies and National Territories. With the enactment of Law No. 1420 of Common Education (1884) and Law No. 1532 on the organization of the National Territories (1884), various mechanisms were formally regulated and implemented aimed at expanding schooling. The imprint of this regulation was influenced by the characteristics inherent to those territories, meaning that its applicability was subject to the "territorial condition" (ARIAS BUCCIARELLI and JENSEN, 2008) in reference to a "tutored republicanism" with "restricted citizenship" (RUFFINI, 2006; 2007), given that the National Territories were administrative divisions dependent on the central government rather than autonomous political units. However, historiography highlights a relative impact of state control in these spaces, suggesting a considerable degree of impermeability to the influence of the centralized model (RUFFINI, 2011; GUIC, 2017), favored by the distances and difficulties that presented by the scarce means of communication and transportation.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that these were vast regions with dispersed and small populations, characterized by heterogeneous social and cultural compositions. We are even referring to geographies of incipient urbanization, although mostly to populations with rural roots. The study of the state of education in these areas has pointed out some of their particularities, although it has done so in a period later than the one we intend to cover here (ASCOLANI, 2012). In this sense, we cannot ignore the unique regional dynamics, although it is not the purpose of this work to delve into them, but rather into the official action that was exerted for such dissimilar societies in their formation and consolidation.

Studies on the particular progress of the federal government and the school system in the National Territories have highlighted the distinctive characteristics in the construction of citizenship as well as the "territorial" difficulties that hindered the implementation of educational policies, including: population density, heterogeneous social composition, lack of transportation and communication means, early employment of children in work, among others (TEOBALDO and GARCÍA, 1997; NICOLETTI, 2003; TEOBALDO, 2008; ARTIEDA, 2015; CAMMAROTA, 2020). Despite this situation, the schools located in the governorates had to assume and achieve a set of objectives related to literacy, childcare, and the formation of national sentiment to bolster sovereignty, making it necessary to quantify, understand, and evaluate the starting conditions in order to then design and supervise the measures implemented.

The decision-making and implementation of educational policies for the National Territories began to establish mechanisms of action typical of the period. We refer to the fact that educational public policies, their formulation, and operationality found their basis in statistics, measurement, and technique as parameters of knowledge and truth (BONETI, 2015). In this regard, some considerations are pertinent. Statistics was then a fundamental source of data that enabled the formulation of diagnoses as well as evaluation of the relevance of the measures adopted. Although the factory of official figures would take decades to standardize criteria, maximize sampling, and broaden its impact and influence throughout the national territory (OTERO, 1998; GONZÁLEZ BOLLO, 2007).⁴

⁴ In addition to the deficiency in statistical matters, there was the explicit difficulty in measuring the contribution of private education through these instruments, which is not considered in the present work.

In addition to statistics, there was an urge to organize the Inspection of schools in the National Territories as a mechanism of control and guarantee of the enforceability of the law, as well as a complementary instrument for acquiring and contrasting data and information. The profile of the Inspection officials was not uniform, and while they generally met the expectations of the central government, at times their interventions took on critical or even opposing positions to those of the CNE (TEOBALDO, 2006; FIORUCCI, 2015; SOUTHWELL, 2015).

In this context, the CNE utilized mechanisms for data collection and information gathering, as well as for control over normative applicability. We highlight statistics and school inspection as fundamental instruments in the design, implementation, and evaluation of state policies for common education, as they allow us to investigate both the elaboration of intervention lines and their application and reception. We will further elaborate on this in the following section.

Understanding from afar: statistics and inspection

With the legal framework outlined and the scope of official action framed, the CNE began to implement measures to organize school statistics, regulating and establishing procedures for recording figures. The processing and dissemination of the statistical data under its responsibility were regularly published in the annual reports presented to the Ministry of Worship, Justice, and Public Instruction.

In the case of the National Territories, the possibility of monitoring school attendance was subject to various local-level devices. In a correspondence exchange from March 1888 between the president of the School Board of Resistencia –Chaco–, P. Costa, and the CNE, the sub-inspector secretary Fernando Guerrico expressed concern about learning that in the schools of the National Territories had issued enrollments irregularly and without informing the higher school authority. As a result, Guerrico ordered the printing and distribution of *school enrollments*⁵, which "will immediately produce the advantage of creating a source of income to cover the expenses that these schools cause, while regularizing school statistics in the areas related to it".⁶ Strengthening records and systematizing data collection was crucial for the authorities.

On their part, the governorates carried out school censuses, either through local initiative via decrees or by national mandate, with the aim of knowing the population of school-age children and thus monitoring and enforcing the obligation of parents to send their children to school. The information gathered was incorporated by the CNE as a reliable source of information. Additionally, teachers kept attendance records, although there was suspicion of data manipulation, with figures being considered accurate that did not match actual classroom attendance.⁷

Likewise, the role of inspection began to take shape, aiming to provide information while monitoring the implementation of measures taken from the Federal Capital. Although well-organized inspection would take time to reach the National Territories and Colonies, the

⁵ According to the provisions established in Law No. 1420 (Chapter II, Articles 15, 16, 17, and 18) and the General Regulations for Public Schools of the Capital and National Territories of the year 1889 (Title V, Chapter II), school enrollment was an annual certificate issued by the school councils to verify the enrollment of school-age children in each district. Additionally, its payment at the rate of one peso national currency per child constituted part of the common treasury of the schools.

⁶ CNE, *EMEC*, No. 131, May 1888, Official Section, p. 496.

⁷ The school statistical spreadsheets were flawed because 'teachers do not keep records properly and are accustomed to including numbers on the statistical sheets that often exceed reality.' In CNE, *EMEC*, No. 206, 10/31/1891, Editorial, p. 129."

journey to Patagonia led by Víctor M. Molina in 1884, who noted that the low school attendance was due to the characteristics of the southern inhabitants, shed some light on the main challenges to overcome in expanding the primary education system and, therefore, helped to clarify the action of the CNE. In this way, it confirmed the urgent need to extend official action in the governorates to meet the educational aspirations dictated by laws, governments, and statesmen.

It wasn't until 1890 that the Inspection of schools in the National Territories was established with the appointment of Raúl B. Díaz, with the aim of bringing unity to the schools, supervising the teachers, instructing the *school councils*⁸ and providing useful information to the CNE to design timely and accurate measures. Inspector Díaz himself inaugurated his tasks considering among his arguments the urgency to visit the territorial schools "because their good governance is difficult if not impossible without an exact knowledge of their state and progress (...) Because the resolution of the educational problem in the Colonies and Territories requires possession of data".⁹ Later, in 1894, the normal teacher Gregorio Lucero was appointed as sub-inspector. Enormous challenges proportional to the territorial vastness of their tasks fell upon them: tours of different regions, establishment of schools, visits to classes, lessons for teachers, among other functions, which they carried out and reported on regularly in their reports, along with the information gathered.

The Inspection monitored the progressive installation of school councils on an itinerant basis, sometimes alternating with overseers in the less populated villages or hamlets. The procedure for this involved declaring a school district in the main population centers and then forming the school council, mostly composed of local residents. Although the Inspection sought to summon individuals with some competence, the instability of its members, lack of interest, and absence of financial compensation tended to weaken these bodies and, by extension, dilute the strength of their functions. Although there were repeated complaints and recommendations to abolish them by decision of the Territorial Inspection, as most members were unaware of their duties and powers, they contributed by making visits to schools, handling administrative matters on behalf of the CNE, and conducting population censuses in their districts.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the two most recurring instruments for assessing, monitoring and ultimately understanding the state of primary education in the National Territories revealed inconsistencies. On one hand, statistics had a recognized margin of error due to the imperfection of measurement instruments and the bias of those who provided tendentious data; on the other hand, inspection due to the profile that characterized the officials of the period. At bottom, statistics and inspection formed a mechanism, articulating and verifying data; creating an image of the state of common education composed of fragments of information considered accurate yet imperfect: number of schools, enrollment and attendance rates, illiteracy, school population, among others. Following Lionetti (2007), school authorities had an obsession with quantifying educational activity, as the production and provision of information operated as raw material to justify decisions and measures taken.

⁸ As established by Law No. 1420 (Chapter IV, Articles 38, 39, 40, 41, and 43) and the General Regulations for Public Schools of the Capital and National Territories of the year 1889, the school councils were constituted by five parents chosen by the CNE for each school district. Designated as the Inspection Commission, they extended the functions of the General Inspection to each neighborhood, overseeing the hygiene, discipline, and morals of the schools under their jurisdiction, promoting the creation of cooperative societies, encouraging the attendance of children in classrooms, and managing the enrollment book. The requirements for their formation in the Federal Capital and in the National Territories were different, as will be seen later.

⁹ CNE, *EMEC*, No. 182, June 15, 1890, News, p. 151.

Although in the early 1890s there were no significant improvements in primary instruction figures, the possession of more reliable information began to stand out, which would drive measures tailored to the needs of the governorates. The newspaper *La Nación* in its 1892 *Yearbook* confirmed that

now there are precise data on the establishments operating in these distant territories, allowing the Council to act with precision because it becomes aware, through the inspector's reports, of the events that occur and the needs that must be met, within the limits of the limited resources allocated by the budget.¹⁰

In this way, with the main data collection mechanisms in place, information systematized, and national and local authorities invested in their functions, policies for the Territories and Colonies gradually gained clarity. One of the main issues to be resolved was the creation of schools¹¹ and the installation of suitable buildings, whose resolution was conditioned by the availability of resources. We will refer to this in the following section.

Policies for the territories: between the urgent and the necessary.

The free public school, understood as a guarantee of compulsory education, was provided for in Law No. 1420¹² with the requirement of having three hundred to five hundred inhabitants to form a district entitled to a school. This means that their creation and, eventually, the construction of these schools were initially linked to the demographic situation. On the other hand, statistics documented the relationship between population growth and the increase in schools. Based on data provided by a census conducted in mid-1884 in Candelaria –Misiones–, police commissioner Horne calculated 497 families and 153 children aged 6 to 15, of which only 4 could read and write.

On the occasion of reaching an agreement with the governor of Chaco Austral, colonel Manuel Obligado, regarding the construction of a school building in Resistencia, the accountant of the CNE traveled and verified the "urgent" need to create that establishment according to the numbers recorded in the enrollment book. Even in the letter addressed to the president of the corporation, Benjamín Zorrilla, in 1885, he emphasized that "According to data, there are about 350 children distributed in the Colony who receive no instruction, despite being of school age and wishing their parents them to attend school in search of what they lack".¹³ Indeed, the mechanism for the creation of a public school began with a formal request supported by data verifying the accuracy of the information provided. Once the budget allocation was exhausted, the CNE selected requests considered "urgent" and requested exceptional resources from the National Congress to tend them. The inspectors and governors were the ones who raised the most requests to the CNE. For example, Juan Ayala, governor of La Pampa, requested the creation of two mixed schools for Departments 2° and 3°, as their population exceeded a thousand habitants each. The response from the Commission handling the case determined that the request was supported by the requirements of the law and that it was legitimate to resolve it favorably:

¹⁰ CNE, *EMEC*, No. 208, February 29, 1892, Editorial, p. 180.

¹¹ In 1884, only 25 state primary schools were registered.

¹² Chapter I. Article 5: The obligation of schooling presupposes the existence of a free public school accessible to children of school age. To this end, each neighborhood of one thousand to one thousand five hundred inhabitants in cities or three hundred to five hundred inhabitants in colonies and national territories shall constitute a School District, with the right to at least one public school where primary education as established by this law is provided in its entirety.

¹³ CNE, *EMEC*, No. 89, October/1885, Resistencia School, p. 958.

but only concerning one school, as the allocation in the budget for this purpose is somewhat limited, and there are many requests of this nature being processed in the Council, and undoubtedly, there will be some in conditions similar to the present one. With the sole purpose of proportionally favoring the different localities that need these benefits, I make this suggestion.¹⁴

If the creation of new establishments was governed by the population requirement, the feasibility of promoting construction in the Territories and Colonies was conditioned by national financial difficulties, as well as by the distortion and interruption in the perception of revenues for school funds, which resulted in the impossibility of fulfilling requests for the creation of new educational establishments. Therefore, the CNE expressed unwillingness¹⁵ based on the fact that most municipalities in the governorships did not have regularized revenue collection for school funds.

Almost daily, requests are presented to the consideration of the National Council, either from authorities or residents, either requesting the creation of schools or requesting the creation of suitable buildings for them to function comfortably. The former, as long as they are within the terms of the law, are immediately considered by the Council I preside over, and once it is assured that there are means for the school to operate, its installation is decreed, and the person to lead it is appointed promptly. The same does not happen with the latter—this kind of requests are often postponed, as the Council does not deem it fair that when localities do not contribute financially to this end, they be provided with buildings constructed with the nation's general revenues, especially when the majority of the population of Colonies and Territories is composed of foreigners who come to the country at the nation's expense, where they are provided with all means of livelihood, given land and tools for work, and not requiring them to make a direct or indirect contribution to partially cover the education of their children would establish a corrupt doctrine.¹⁶

The CNE initially argued that the dynamics of school openings were due to the lack of contribution of revenues and patents by municipalities in the governorships, a fact that led to the repeated distortion of municipal revenue collection and financing of school expenses prescribed by Law No. 1420.¹⁷ The General Inspection of Territories supported this position

¹⁴ CNE, *EMEC*, No. 137, August 15, 1888, Official Section, p. 799.

¹⁵ This objection finds its precedent in the words that Sarmiento expressed in the annual report of the CNE for 1881, where he conditioned the creation of schools in Colonies and Territories to the acceptance by their inhabitants of the notions of duties and obligations established by national laws. Otherwise, he said, "This will cause this Council not to hurry to satisfy the requests for furniture, books, buildings, teachers, etc., that rain from all sides in the files sent by the Minister until this administration is somehow regularized." In CNE (1881), *Common Education in the Capital and the Application in the Provinces of the national subsidy law followed by documents and circulars*, Year 1881, Superintendent's Report, presidency of Domingo F. Sarmiento, p. 61.

¹⁶ CNE (1888), *Common Education in the Capital, Provinces, Colonies, and National Territories*, Year 1887, Second Part, Colonies and Territories, p. 334.

¹⁷ Law No. 1420. Chapter V.

and denounced in its reports¹⁸ the delays in the delivery of revenues related to the school fund. Subsequently, the CNE repeatedly replied to the Ministry of Public Instruction about the shortage of resources allocated in the budget for schools in the National Territories as another cause of the slow progress of schooling in those regions. In the annual report of 1893, it was indicated that "the mere fact of not increasing from one year to another the amounts invested in common education is to regress, considering that the child population always increases".¹⁹ Although those words were not exact, they indicated the financial irregularity of the schools in the Territories, which also did not have a regular allocation for construction or repairs.

It was Raúl B. Díaz who persistently advocated for a revision of budget allocations for schools in the National Territories. In the annual report of 1891, he called for an update to the CNE, considering that

Money is the fundamental basis for the progress of schools; therefore, I pay preferential attention to the current Budget (...) A budget dictated for schools of past governorships does not suit those of today, which have undergone a significant evolution from 1885 to the present. In its essence and form, it must be replaced by another that aligns with the current progress and needs of the governorships.²⁰

His continuous complaint pointed to the government and the National Congress for the lack of funding for the creation of schools in the Territories, and considered it a failure of the CNE not to be able to increase the budget. When presenting his annual report for 1894, Díaz wondered "When will we be able to announce the correction of many mistakes made among us? (...) There is no shortage of ideas to strengthen the schools of the governorships; what is lacking are resources".²¹

String along with that request numerous mentions were made regarding the development of certain populations and the exponential growth of their inhabitants, which increased the rates of absenteeism: in 1894, an editorial note in *El Monitor* estimated the school-age population in the Territories at approximately 40,000 children, of which only 2,093 were enrolled in schools;²² subsequently, the annual report of the CNE for 1894-1895 stated that "In the territories, only 3.4% of its inhabitants attend school".²³

Indeed, the budgets allocated to schooling in the National Territories and Colonies were modest, despite the fact that revenues earmarked for public education were progressively increasing. Starting from a modest base, from 1890 to 1895, the year-on-year budget variation was expressed as follows: 8.91%, 22.9%, 17.99%, 21.33%, and 24.25%.

¹⁸ From the tour of Formosa, Chaco, and Misiones in 1892, Díaz reported that "The Municipalities of Formosa, Resistencia, Posadas, and Concepción do not give the 15% of their revenues which, according to article 44, section 5 of the Law, corresponds to the common fund of the schools (...) The Municipalities have given me more than convincing explanations, and they have continued to show an unworthy behavior. They say that the needs of the municipalities are many and the revenues limited: as if education was not among those needs or did not take precedence!" In CNE, *EMEC*, No. 217, October 31, 1892, Official Section, p. 423.

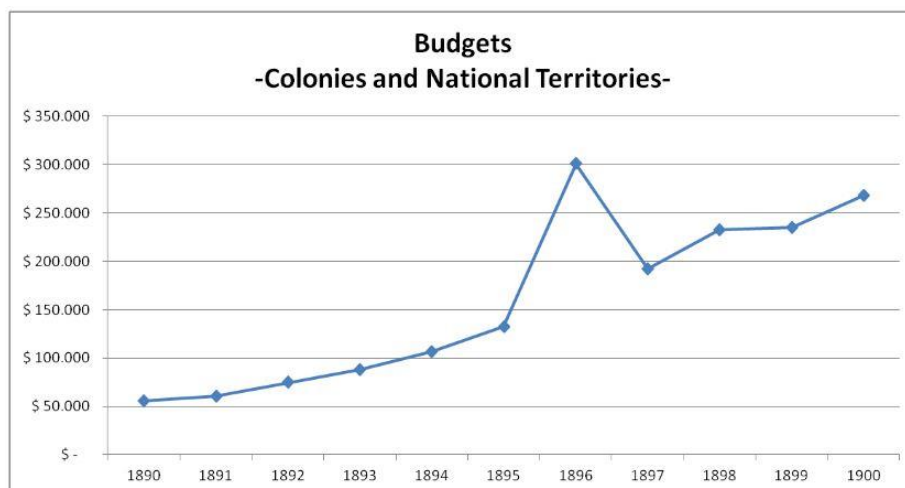
¹⁹ CNE (1894), *Common Education in the Capital, Provinces, and National Territories*, Year 1893, Volume I, Part I, Education in the Republic, p. 65.

²⁰ CNE, *EMEC*, No. 218, October 30, 1892, Official Section, p. 459.

²¹ CNE, *EMEC*, No. 265, August 31, 1895, Official Section, p. 206.

²² CNE, *EMEC*, No. 241, January 15, 1894, Editorial Section, p. 548.

²³ CNE, *EMEC*, No. 272, March 31, 1896, Editorial Section, p. 532.

Table No. 1: Budgets for schools in the National Territories.

Source: Own elaboration based on data provided in the annual reports of the CNE

These allocations were marked by the economic crisis of 1890, which restricted the financial impetus of the State, leading to a reduction in resources for the promotion of public schooling and the paralysis of school construction projects across the country. For the case of the National Territories, the extraordinary allocation for building construction was eliminated by decree of the National Government. This situation supports what Duarte (2013; 2015) has stated regarding the late arrival of the state apparatus in the Patagonian territories, inferring among its causes the discordance with the interests to which the national government's economic project responded, exacerbated in a context of crisis. By 1892, the annual report of the CNE acknowledged that

The lack of financial resources, on the one hand, and the poverty of the neighborhoods and the scarce ingrained habit of sacrificing for education, have hindered, among other secondary causes, giving a significant boost to school construction, which undoubtedly requires substantial amounts.²⁴

The construction of school houses in the Territories depended on financial aid from the national treasury, donations or loans of land or buildings, and the collaboration of the populations in providing materials (wood, bricks, etc.). None of these was a stable source of resources. However, the Inspection did not cease to insist on the urgent need to promote the creation of schools, nor did the CNE cease to respond by using the scarce resources allocated to it. The publications of *El Monitor* in 1894 gave greater relevance to the issue in their editorials, stating that "Education in the National Territories is attended to as well as the scarce resources at its disposal allow. It is a matter of improving the condition by applying greater resources to the support of its schools".²⁵ Thus, in 1895, based on the repeated insistence of Inspector Díaz and in view of the population growth, the CNE requested from the National Congress, through the Ministry of Education, the inclusion of an ordinary budget item destined to create schools in the governorships, whose impact represented by the 127.17% increase in 1896 could not be sustained over time, preventing the slight trend from

²⁴ CNE (1893), *Common Education in the Capital, Provinces, and National Territories*, Year 1892, Volume I, Part II, Education in the Capital and Territories, School of the Governorships, p. 215.

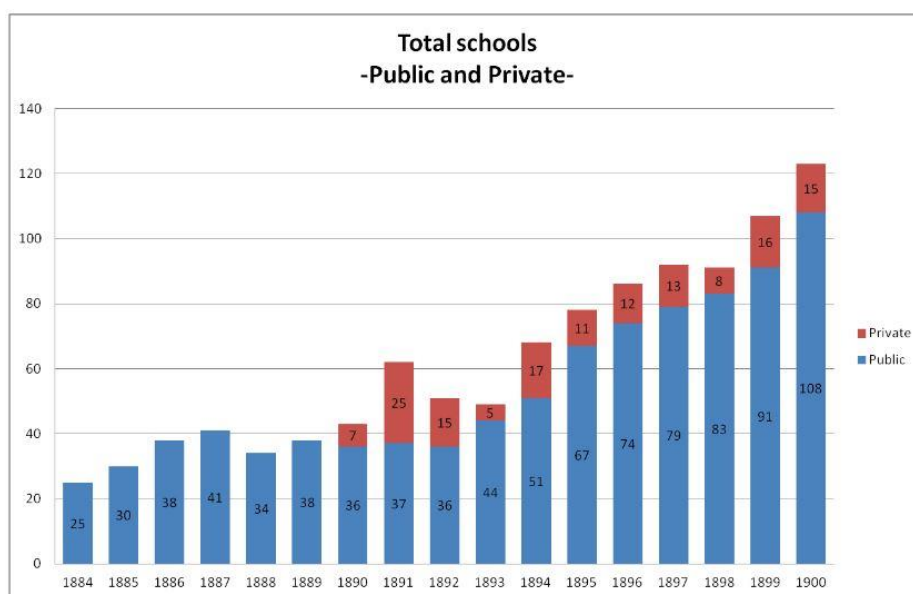
²⁵ CNE, *EMEC*, No. 241, January 15, 1894, Editorial Section, p. 548.

being reversed and the budget falling by 36.2% the following year. However, it allowed for a brief boost in construction work, doubling the number of government-owned houses.²⁶

Although the CNE expressed regret over the decision to exempt a special allocation for the creation of schools and construction in the National Territories, the country's financial situation warranted another budget cut to common education. In this regard, by 1897, the Inspection in its annual report would once again complain about the primacy of "uniformity in everything" promoted by the centralism of Buenos Aires. In this sense, they expressed that "Even the funds destined for the support of public instruction are distributed more by the force of that mania than by the demands of justice".²⁷ However, and continuing Duarte's argument, the problem of financial insufficiency could not be reduced to a distribution issue; since "The distribution and destination of funds respond to a defined interest and a particular social orientation for education" (2018, p. 151).

Although the Federal Capital presented better conditions for access to its schools, in that year the construction in that city was paralyzed, while it continued in the Territories, allowing a temporary and preferential attention to the schools of the governorships. As observed in Table No. 2, there were no significant setbacks in the number of government-owned schools, considering that the budget recovery was timid in the following years, representing increases of 21.02% in 1898, 1.02% in 1899, and 14.13% in 1900.

Table No. 2: Government-Owned and Private Schools in National Territories



Source: Own elaboration based on data provided in the *Annual Reports* of the CNE.

Towards the end of the period under observation, the growth in the number of schools was evident but not sufficient. The annual reports of 1899 and 1900 concluded that despite the increasing number of schools in the governorships, and to a lesser extent, more government-owned buildings, these were not enough to meet the ever-growing demand of expanding populations; this was confirmed by the requests for the creation of schools and the data provided by the Inspection. However, the scope and limits of official action had, in the words of Raúl B. Díaz, a historical explanation:

²⁶ CNE (1893), *Common Education in the Capital, Provinces, and National Territories*, Year 1892, Volume I, Part II, Education in the Capital and Territories, School of the Governorships, p. 215.

²⁷ CNE (1897), *Common Education in the Capital, Provinces, and National Territories*, Year 1896-1897, Volume II, Part II, Territories Inspection, pp. 91-92.

The one who truly appreciates these difficulties, who has left the metropolitan office and traveled through the deserted republic, who compares the present and past of the governorships that just ten years ago were almost all in the hands of the barbarians, who, still young, has reached the rural school inland, dismantled, with long benches without backs and felt in it the brutal blow of the paddle; that person cannot help but feel a certain satisfaction upon seeing, I won't say the crowded schools of Posadas, Resistencia, Formosa, and other places, but the most remote ones in Misiones, Neuquén, and Patagonia. The type is not perfect, but it belongs to the modern school and era.²⁸

The reference to the historical process and the educational system under construction raised by Inspector Díaz is necessary to make visible certain dimensions of the complexity of the institutionalization process of the educational system in those regions. The CNE encountered various obstacles when expanding its influence in common education in the governorships. On one hand, the impact of its prerogatives was heterogeneous: in some more consolidated and prosperous populations, they found support and assistance; in more remote areas, they echoed in a vacuum rather than being established. On the other hand, it was only possible to gradually increase the number of educational establishments, restricted to what the budget authorized, which did not prevent the school from slowly but progressively reaching different corners of the country. Ultimately, towards the end of the period in question, the result was promising but unsatisfactory.

Conclusions

By the end of the 19th century, the mandate of Law No. 1420 determined the government to establish and expand a system of free primary schools. The requirements for their establishment set forth in the regulations contrasted with the dynamics of civil society in the National Territories and Colonies. In addition to the material difficulties that characterized the expansion of primary education in these jurisdictions, other political and budgetary challenges are evident.

On one hand, the development and implementation of educational policies were not without various material difficulties. The formulation of timely and effective measures was confined to a circuit of long distances, coordinated by statistics and inspections that provided an overview to metropolitan authorities. Although limited and sometimes biased, this was the feedback possible between the decision-making center and the educational demands of territorial populations; since statistics and reports poorly indicated the locations where it was most urgent to establish an educational institution.

As statistical data supported requests for the creation of schools, progressively providing more accurate information and attesting to the population growth of the governorates, the demand year after year exceeded the capacity of response that the national treasury foresaw to meet the need to create schools. Any state policy, whatever it may be, requires available resources to make it operational, and in this case, the creation of schools and the construction of facilities in the National Territories faced budgetary obstacles of both endogenous and exogenous nature.

²⁸ CNE, *EMEC*, No. 277, August 31, 1896, Official Section, p. 798.

If the scarce and irregular financial flow determined the conditions of possibility to substantiate the mandate of facilitating access to school for the child population, statistical data, inspector reports, and requests from neighbors and even governors led to a prioritization order in the face of resource scarcity. In this way, the CNE created primary education establishments because an increase in the number of schools corresponded to an increase in their potential students. The dynamics of the operation were in response to demand, and the distribution of allocated funds was proportional, thus configuring the order of priorities.

Bibliography

ARIAS BUCCIARELLI, Mario y JENSEN, Silvina Inés (2008). “La historiografía de los Territorios Nacionales: un campo en construcción”, *Anuario del Centro de Estudios Históricos "Prof. Carlos S.A. Segreti*, vol. 8, pp. 183-200.

ARTIEDA, Teresa Laura (2014). “Educación ¿común y laica? para la infancia indígena en los Territorios Nacionales de Chaco y Formosa. 1900 a 1930”, *Anuario de Historia de la Educación Argentina*, v.16, n.1, p.8-24. Disponible en: <https://encr.pw/W4IS2>

ASCOLANI, Adrián. (2012). “La escuela primaria rural en Argentina. Expansión, orientaciones y dificultades (1916-1932)”, *Revista Teias*, vol. 13, no. 28, p. 16.

BERTONI, Lilia Ana (2001). *Patriotas, cosmopolitas y nacionalistas. La construcción de la nacionalidad argentina a fines del siglo XIX*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

BONETI, Lindomar Wessler (2015). "Fundamentos epistemológicos de las políticas educativas: De la razón moderna al discurso de inclusión social", en TELLO, César (Comp.) *Los objetos de estudio de la Política Educativa*. Buenos Aires: Autores de Argentina, pp. 63-77.

CAMMAROTA, Adrián (2020). “Nacionalizar y educar: problemas de la Educación Común en los Territorios Nacionales (1890-1940)”, *Avances del Cesor*, vol. 17, no. 22, pp. 23-50. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35305/ac.v17i22.1048>

DUARTE, Oscar Daniel (2013). “La escuela en el “desierto”. El estado de la educación pública en la Patagonia de fines del siglo XIX”, *Cuadernos del Sur Historia*, vol. 42, pp. 69-86.

DUARTE, Oscar Daniel (2015). “Al sur de la frontera. Las escuelas en la Patagonia a fines del siglo XIX”, *Revista de Estudios Marítimos y Sociales*, vol. 7-8, pp. 192-214.

DUARTE, Oscar Daniel (2018). *El Estado y la educación: economía y política en los orígenes del sistema educativo argentino*. Buenos Aires: Universidad Pedagógica Nacional.

FIORUCCI, Flavia (2015). “Raúl B. Díaz: el inspector de Territorios Nacionales. Miradas, recorridos y reclamos de un funcionario viajero (1890-1916)”, *Anuario de Historia de la Educación Argentina*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 82-92. Disponible en: <https://encr.pw/oa90I>

GONZÁLEZ BOLLO, Hernán (2007). *La estadística pública y la expansión del estado argentino: una historia social y política de una burocracia especializada, 1869-1947*. Tesis de posgrado no publicada. Buenos Aires: Universidad Torcuato Di Tella.

GUIC, Laura (2017). “Las políticas educativas en la Historia de la Educación. Un aporte para el estudio de las políticas educativas, en el Centenario de la Revolución Argentina”, *Perspectivas Metodológicas*, vol. 17, no. 20, pp. 25-32. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18294/pm.2017.1652>

LIONETTI, Lucía (2007). *La misión política de la escuela pública. Formar a los ciudadanos de la república (1870-1916)*. Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila Editores.

NICOLETTI, María Andrea (2003). “Derecho a ser educados: conceptos sobre educación y evangelización para los indígenas de la Patagonia a través del escrito inédito de un misionero salesianos”, *Anuario de Historia de la Educación Argentina*, vol. 4, pp. 137-157.

MARENGO, Roberto (1991). “Estructuración y consolidación del poder normalizador: el Consejo Nacional de Educación”. En PUIGGROS, Adriana (Coord.) *Sociedad Civil y Estado en los orígenes del sistema educativo argentino*, Buenos Aires: Galerna, pp. 71-176.

MINTEGUEAGA GARABÁN, Analía Mara (2009). “Constitución y consolidación del sistema de enseñanza argentino y los sentidos de la “educación pública”: las discusiones centrales”, en MINTEGUEAGA GARABÁN, Analía Mara *Lo público de la educación pública: la reforma educativa de los noventa en Argentina*, México: Flacso México, pp. 51-119.

OTERO, Hernán (1998). “Estadística censal y construcción de la nación. El caso argentino, 1869-1914”, *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana “Dr. Emilio Ravignani”*, vol. 16, no. 17, pp. 123-149.

ROJKIND, Inés Carolina y CUCCHI, Laura (2018). “Nuevas perspectivas sobre la política argentina entre 1880 y 1916: enfoques, categorías y cronologías”, *Pasado Abierto*, vol. 7, no. 6, pp. 208-215.

RUFFINI, Martha (2006). “Ciudadanía restringida para los territorios nacionales: contradicciones en la consolidación del estado argentino”, *EIAL: Estudios Interdisciplinarios de America Latina y el Caribe*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 61-86.

RUFFINI, Martha (2007). “La consolidación inconclusa del Estado: los Territorios Nacionales, gobernaciones de provisionalidad permanente y ciudadanía política restringida (1884-1955)”, *Revista SAAP*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 81-101.

RUFFINI, Martha (2011). “Los territorios nacionales. Un nuevo actor político en la historiografía argentina”, en GIRBAL-BLACHA, Noemi y MOREYRA, Beatriz (Comp.) *Producción de conocimiento y transferencia en las ciencias sociales*. Buenos Aires: Imago Mundi.

TEDESCO, Juan Carlos (1986). *Educación y sociedad (1880-1945)*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Solar.

TEOBALDO, Mirta Elena; GARCÍA, Amelia Beatriz; HERNÁNDEZ, Adriana (1997). “Estado, educación y sociedad civil en Río Negro”, en PUIGGRÓS, Adriana (Coord.) *La Educación en las Provincias*, Buenos Aires: Galerna, pp. 262-284.

TEOBALDO, Mirta Elena (2006). “Los Inspectores escolares en los orígenes del sistema educativo en la Patagonia Norte (Argentina – 1884-1957)”, *Educere et Educare*, v.1, n.2, pp. 13-32.

TEOBALDO, Mirta Elena (2008). “Las luces de la civilización. Enseñar y aprender en las escuelas de la Patagonia Norte. Neuquén y Río Negro (1884-1957)”, *Espacios en Blanco-Revista de Educación*, no. 18, pp. 167-186

SSOUTHWELL, Myriam (2015). “La Ley 1420 y la tarea de los Inspectores escolares”, *Historia de la educación*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 63-72.

Sources

CNE. *El Monitor de la Educación Común* (EMEC), 1884-1900. Buenos Aires.

CNE. *Educación Común en la Capital, Provincias y Territorios Nacionales*, Informes presentados al Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, 1881-1900. Buenos Aires.