

RURAL EDUCATION: AN OVERVIEW OF SEVEN COUNTRIES

2019



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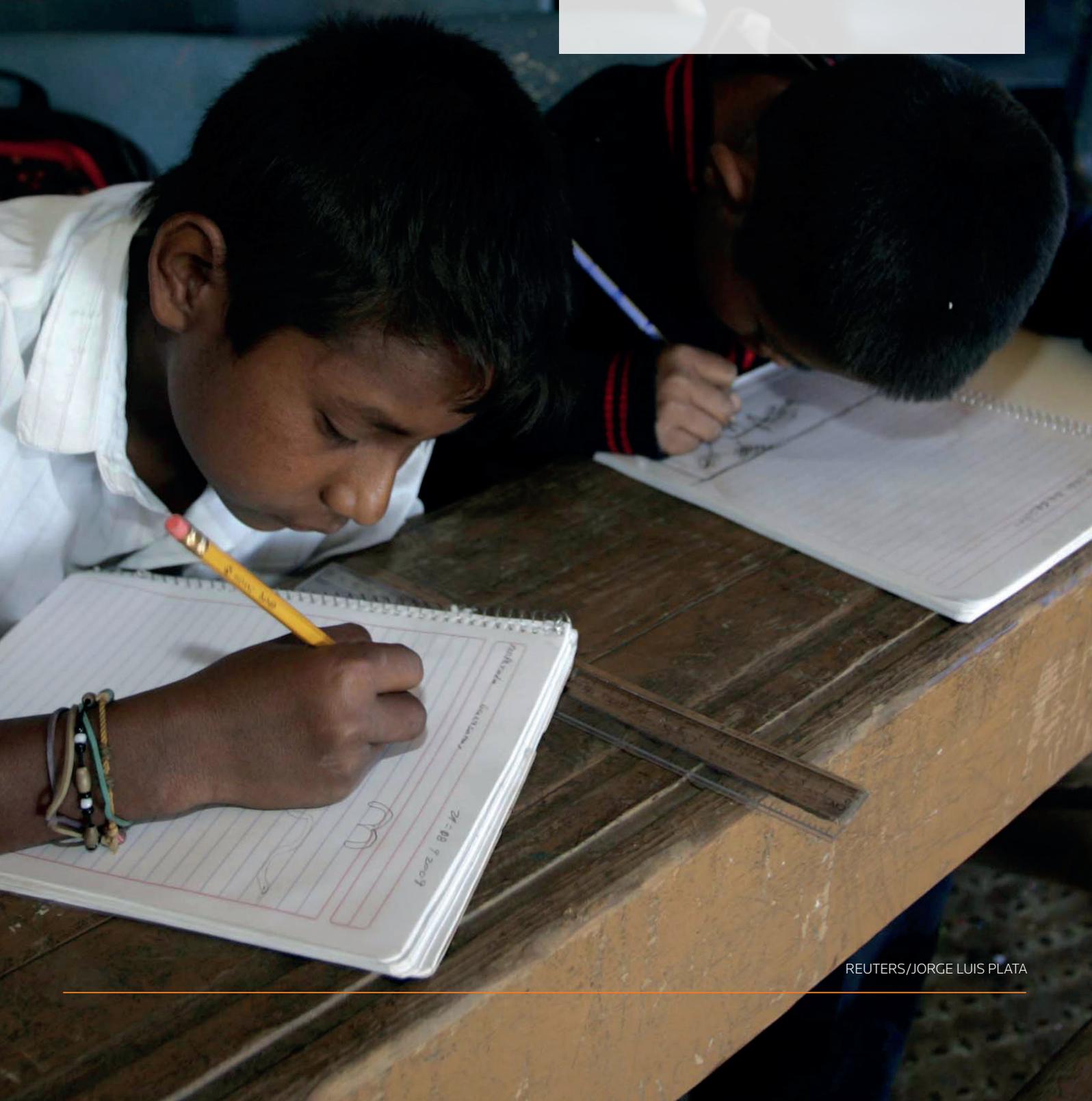


EduRural is a network comprised of over 30 civil society organizations which share the commitment towards rural education in Argentina. Together, they reach 22 provinces and 1,652 educational institutions in rural areas. This means that EduRural has an impact on around 10% of the Common Education institutions of which there is record in the country¹.

EduRural's three areas of focus are: guidance of teachers, headmasters and supervisors during their training; encouragement and support of networking among educational institutions; and ensuring the availability of necessary resources in all schools.

¹ Source: Institutions Record 2018 (updated as at 20/11/2018) MAE. Argentine Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology.

FOREWORD





FOREWORD

According to the United Nations, children from the poorest households are four times more likely to be out of school than those of the richest households with disparities between rural and urban areas also remaining high. Achieving inclusive and quality education for all reaffirms the belief that access to quality education is a human right and one of the most powerful agents for sustainable development. As set out in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, governments worldwide have agreed that all children should have free, equitable and quality education by 2030, a key to unlock many other SDGs.

At the Thomson Reuters Foundation we raise awareness of human rights issues around the world and drive cross-sector collaboration to respond to urgent challenges where our expertise can lead to impact. This publication compares the quality of rural education in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Spain, Mexico and Uruguay and examines key aspects such as budgets and accessibility.

This report is produced thanks to a close collaboration between the Thomson Reuters Foundation, EduRural and a team of dedicated lawyers around the world. Bruchou, Fernández Madero & Lombardi played a leading role in coordinating this investigation, together with Machado Meyer Advogados, Morales, Besa and Cia Ltda, Hogan Lovells and Dechert LLP. We are extremely grateful to the teams of lawyers who tirelessly and generously committed their time and experience to make this report possible.

We hope this publication will be a useful tool to raise awareness about the challenges facing rural education, and to effectively support the various entities and organizations that advocate for all children to access quality education regardless of the context in which they live.

Glen Tarman
Director of TrustLaw



CONTENTS

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION	
REASONS FOR THE RESEARCH	
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	
ANALYSIS	
I) GOVERNING LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS	
II) GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITIES	
III) BUDGET	
IIII) ACCESS TO EDUCATION	
CONCLUSIONS	
RECOMMENDATIONS	



ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This research was conducted as a result of EduRural's initiative to explore how rural education is framed in different countries and to learn about good practices in public policies in order to promote dialogue and discussion between the public sector and civil society organizations.

The countries studied have been chosen based on different criteria:

Brazil, Mexico and Australia, like Argentina, are countries that have a federal educational system. They are also countries that may be similar to Argentina in terms of dimensions and territorial organisation and, in some respects, have a similar economic development historically.

On the other hand, Uruguay and Chile have a centralized educational system. However, since they are geographically and culturally close to Argentina and have bilateral relations with the country, they are also countries of key interest.

Finally, Spain was also included in the research because of its long history in education and rural contexts.



REASONS FOR THE RESEARCH

Rural education is a category within the educational system recognized as such in the Argentine National Education Act, No 26.206/2006 (LEN, in Spanish). In Argentina, there are 17,617 educational institutions that fall within the category of rural schools. 881,153 students receive primary education and 264,668 students receive secondary education in these institutions. Furthermore, there is a total of 94,881 teachers of Common Education in rural schools, which means that there are around 8 and 11 students per teacher, depending on the stage².

In order to offer equal opportunities to students from rural areas, it is important to understand the specific nature of rural areas. Rural schools act as an anchor in the community which they are situated and provide a “social purpose” to its surroundings. They also spread culture, socialization, traditions and values that allow for social cohesion, while promoting local and regional economies.

Most school-age children living in rural areas live in isolation and have limited access to education of the same quality as their peers in urban areas.

Moreover, most rural schools have their own characteristics and challenges, such as the various issues related to accessibility; school buildings that are in poor condition or unsuitable for use; the lack or insufficiency of electricity, drinking water or hygiene to cover the basic needs of both teachers and students; and the lack of, or poor, internet connection.

Furthermore, on many occasions, some teachers working at these schools have told us that they do not feel properly trained because they believe the training provided for teachers in relation to the planning and pedagogic tools required for these situations is insufficient.

Additionally, only 3,493³ educational institutions are secondary schools, so around half of the students attending primary schools in rural areas do not have the possibility of completing mandatory schooling within their communities. Consequently, many students drop out of school after finishing primary school studies.

Although rural areas are extremely diverse and no school is the same as another (neither between countries nor within the same country), some of these issues are common to them all. That is why, to improve the existing practices in Argentina, it is of utmost importance to know the way in which other countries work to ensure **equal education**.

¹. Combination of two sources: Regarding institutions: Institutions Record 2018 (updated as at 20/11/2018) MAE. MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY. Regarding teachers and students: Annual Record 2017. Department for the Statistics on Education. Argentine National Ministry of Education.

². Same as 2.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How education is regulated in each country and what is the relevant legislation in force?
 - Are there any public policies designed to ensure equal education in rural areas?
 - Who is the governmental authority in charge of rural schools?
 - How is the education budget allocated to rural education?
 - How is access to mandatory schooling ensured in rural areas?
-



ANALYSIS

To conduct this analysis and provide an answer to the research questions, the information gathered by the law firms of the countries involved was grouped into four categories:

- Governing legislation and regulations
- Governmental authorities
- Budget
- Access to education

I) GOVERNING LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

In Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Spain and Mexico, education matters are addressed by different national, regional and local authorities, which have their own powers and duties.

In **Argentina**, the National Government oversees the establishment of educational policies and controls compliance with such policies to strengthen national unity, whilst respecting provincial and local characteristics at all times. The National Government, the Provincial Government and C.A.B.A. (Autonomous City of Buenos Aires) are responsible for providing comprehensive, permanent and quality education to the people of Argentina, thereby ensuring equality, equity and free-of-charge education through federal and provincial laws that regulate education in each jurisdiction.

In Argentina, as mentioned above, Rural Education is provided for in Chapter X of Law No. 26.206/2006 (LEN). Section 49 thereof defines Rural Education as “a category within the educational system, comprising early, primary and secondary stages, intended to ensure compliance with mandatory schooling through such means that are appropriate to the needs and characteristics of the population in rural areas. It is implemented in schools that have been categorised as rural according to the standards agreed upon by the Argentine Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the provinces, through the Federal Council for Education.”

The Australian regulatory framework of the educational system is more complex, as **Australia** is comprised of states and territories, which have their own laws, and a federal government that adopts federal laws. In practice, regulating education in Australia is a shared responsibility of the central government and the federal governments of the states and territories. States and territories are responsible for the operation, administration and funding of schools. The relevant duties of the states, territories and the federal government were defined under the Commonwealth of Australia. Also defined are the means by which the states and territories share information, communicate, and cooperate with each other in matters related to education through the Council of Australian

Governments, the Council for Education and the several cooperation agreements existing between them.

In Australia, although rural education is not recognized as such under statute, in practice, many state departments regard rural or remote education as a specific category. In 2017, the Australian Government implemented the Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education (IRRRRE) as part of the federal government's commitment to improve education in the country. According to the IRRRRE, the determinations for the provision of education in rural and remote areas are based on factors such as the size of the population and the distance between the capital city or a considerable regional centre.

The educational system in **Brazil** is regulated through federal, provincial and local laws. The Federal Constitution of Brazil of 1988 sets forth that education is a right of all individuals, as well as a duty of the Government and families, and that it shall be promoted and fostered through civic cooperation, aiming at the full development of the individual, the exercise of citizenship rights and job training. It is therein set forth that the Federal Government, the provinces, the Federal District and the municipalities shall always act collaboratively in the organization of the educational system.

Rural education in Brazil is particularly regulated. Under Regulation No 04/2010 of 2017, rural education began to be recognised as a category of Basic Education through the establishment of some actions that should be taken to improve public school infrastructure, early and ongoing training of teachers and the development of specific material for rural and Quilombola students. Also, to respect social, cultural, environmental, political, economic, gender, generational and ethnic diversity. Furthermore, the Brazilian Federal Education Act No 9.394/96 sets forth that the educational system shall encourage any modification that is necessary in order to adapt to the characteristics of rural life, depending on each region. The syllabus and teaching methods shall be adapted to the actual needs and interests of rural students, as well as the school organization. This includes adapting the calendar to the stages of the agricultural cycle, climate conditions and the characteristics of rural work. This Regulation also provides for different criteria related to the school location and transportation logistics to facilitate access.

In **Spain**, the national government is represented by the central administration and is exclusively responsible for regulating how the different educational stages are structured and the conditions to obtain, issue and approve academic diplomas. On the other hand, the different regional educational administrations are responsible for enforcing the legislation and adapting it to the characteristics of the population. Likewise, the law provides for cooperation bodies in order to facilitate communication between national and local authorities.

Rural education in Spain is not separately and individually regulated. However, the different educational laws include regulation in this regard, such as the consideration of the particular nature of rural schools in order to provide the relevant means and systems which are appropriate to meet their specific needs and ensure equal opportunities. The Council for Education and Science shall provide complimentary services for school transport, meals and housing so that geographical dispersion and communication difficulties do not hamper access to Basic Mandatory Schooling. In rural areas where dispersion and isolation are present, projects to compensate the deficit in education shall be promoted in order to achieve a greater degree of socialization and knowledge of other environments.

Concerning **Mexico**, the General Education Act of 1993 provides for shared and exclusive powers and duties of the Federation, states and municipalities, setting forth that they shall cooperate in the use and regulation

of an information system. This system is known as the Educational Information and Management System (SIGED, in Spanish).

Additionally, Mexico does not have a specific section established for rural education. However, some legal provisions do recognise rural education and provide for some regulation on that matter.

In contrast, **Chile** is a unitary State and, therefore has a common legal system which is applied through the country and lacks binding provisions that are exclusively regional or local. The Chilean educational system is mainly structured in accordance with the provisions of the Political Constitution of the Republic of Chile of 1980 and the General Education Act No 20.370/2009. The Ministry of Education is the governmental governing body responsible for enforcing the right to education at all stages and has, at a local level, individual administrative organs referred to as Ministerial Regional Secretaries (SEREMI, in Spanish). In Chile, public schools are locally administered, this is known as “municipalisation”.

Under Chilean law, rural education is governed by general provisions. However, there are some statutes and regulations that recognise the category of rural area as a factor to grant certain special rights, allowances and subsidies.

Uruguay is a similar case. In December 2008, the Uruguayan Parliament enacted the General Education Act No 18.437, which is aimed at regulating, in a single statute, different aspects of education. The General Education Act appoints the Ministry of Education and Culture and the National Administration for Public Education as the authorities on education matters and establishes their objectives, powers and duties.

In Uruguay, the Act sets forth that rural education, the education for young and elder people and the education for persons with disabilities will be given particular consideration.

Each country establishes the mandatory nature of education through their legislation. In all the countries studied, it is estimated that education is regarded as mandatory until the student finishes what is called secondary education in Argentina, that is until the student is 17 or 18 years old. School is mandatory as from the age of:

Argentina	4 years old
Australia	6 years old
Brasil	4 years old
Chile	4 years old
España	6 years old
México	4 years old
Uruguay	4 years old

Source: Own elaboration.

II) GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITIES

In the analysis, it was considered important to identify the governmental authorities responsible for ensuring equal education for schools in rural contexts.

In **Argentina**, Rural Education is the responsibility of the National Department for Educational Policy Planning, which has a division specialized in Rural Education. This Department is tasked with situation-based strategic planning at national level and is used as a tool for the design, implementation and monitoring of educational policies. Therefore, it is responsible for the handling and organization of, and any other action related to, rural education, including infrastructure. However, it is the responsibility of each local authority to oversee that the objectives in each province are achieved. In other words, it is not the responsibility of the National Department to ensure that the goals are achieved, but rather each Provincial Ministry, through its specialised division in Rural Education.

In **Brazil**, there are federal authorities responsible for public policies on rural education. These are the Secretary for Continuous Education, Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion (SECADI, in Spanish) and the National Committee for Rural Education (CONEC, in Spanish). Order No 9.005/2017 establishes SECADI's main powers, which are the following:

- i. Planning, organization and coordination of, together with the Provinces, the Federal District and the Municipalities, the implementation of public policies on rural education, and the education of indigenous and Quilombola communities.
- ii. Fostering the technical and financial cooperation among the Federal Government, the Provinces, the Federal District and the Municipalities and other national and international entities to promote literacy, rural education, and the education of indigenous and Quilombola communities, etc.

The Federal Government is responsible for coordinating the federal policies on education and applying rules of redistribution and rules that are complementary to other education contexts. The provinces must guarantee primary education and offer, as a priority, secondary education to those requesting it. The municipalities must offer early education for infants in nurseries, early school institutions and, primarily, primary education.

In **Uruguay**, there is a Department for Education in Rural Areas (DER, in Spanish), which falls within the Council for Early and Primary Education (CEIP, in Spanish). Its course of action is focused on two large concepts related to rural education:

- i. National pedagogy related to rural areas: the social nature of each rural school and the close relationship between schools and communities thereby created; and
- ii. Multi-grade approach (children of different ages sharing the same class): the particular approach resulting from the effects that multi-grade groups have on teaching methods and learning processes.

According to such Department, there are 1,090 rural schools, which accounts for 40% of all schools in the country.

Moreover, apart from the DER, there is an institutional network throughout the Uruguayan territory which represents rural areas in the country. Some institutions that are part of that network are: Centro Agustín Ferreiro, Centro de Educación Rural, Centro de Apoyo Pedagógico Didáctico para Escuelas Rurales, among others.

In **Chile**, although there is not a Department for Rural Education within the Ministry of Education, there is a National Coordinator that is in contact with all the actors in the rural education field at the national level. The Ministry of Education exercises its powers at a national level through its Regional Secretaries. The Ministerial Regional Secretaries and Provincial Departments support the work of the Ministry of Education in all applicable regions and work directly with rural communities within their jurisdiction.

Furthermore, as it is recognised that rural education has its own characteristics that distinguish it from other categories of regular education, it is considered that rural education must be regulated separately. Consequently, Order No 968/2012, which allows meetings of rural school teachers in small centres was issued. Such meetings are aimed at: thinking about the pedagogic work carried out by teachers; exchanging pedagogic experiences; and agreeing on standards for the development of improvement plans related to the learning needs. Law No 21.040 was also enacted. Such law sets forth that the executive directors of Local Education Services shall call, at least once a year, a conference for all the headmasters of educational institutions and the teachers of rural schools that depend on the Local Education Service.

In accordance with the legal provisions, it is mandatory that educational institutions submit their plans and programmes on primary and secondary education for the approval of the Ministry of Education. In this regard, the educational institutions shall present their own plans and programmes to the relevant regional education authority. The plans and programs shall be regarded as approved by the Ministry of Education after a period of sixty days has passed from the date of presentation.

In **Mexico**, the authority in charge of education at a federal level is the Secretary of Public Education (SEP, in Spanish), each federal entity also has a state Secretary of Education. Both are responsible for offering conditions that guarantee the access of all individuals to quality education at the level and form they require and in the place where they demand it. This commitment is in line with section 38 of the Federal Organic Act on Public Administration of 1967, which sets forth that the Secretary of Public Education is charged with, among other matters, early, primary and secondary education, as well as regular, urban, semi urban and rural education. This section demonstrates the obligation of the SEP with respect to rural education, which, although it does not have a specific department, it should be exclusively responsible for rural education if it supports different projects and any coordination activity, such as the General Coordination of Intercultural and Bilingual Education, which is responsible for ensuring adequate education for rural populations.

As this is a shared responsibility, local and federal authorities shall coordinate and work together towards the achievement of national objectives on education.

In **Spain**, the management and administration of the educational system is decentralized. Powers and duties are distributed between the General State Administration, which controls and regulates the educational system (through the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports) and the Autonomous Communities (through the Councils or Departments for Education). Each Autonomous Community has an educational administration responsible for regulating rural education specifically depending on the

jurisdiction. However, the different laws of the Autonomous Community must be in line with the applicable organic laws.

In order that all territories can comply with the national objectives, chapter IV on “Cooperation among educational Administrations” of the Organic Act on Education No 2 of 2006 (LOE, in Spanish) governs the coordination among national and local administrations, the exchange of information among them and the general management and planning of the educational system.

On the other hand, in **Australia**, there are not any authorities at the federal level specializing in rural schools. However, there are specific units in some states, such as in New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland. Nevertheless, in all cases, the financial support provided by the national Government to the states is subject to compliance with policy implementation.



III) BUDGET

Included in the research was the analysis on whether there is any amount, within the general budget for education, which is specifically allocated to rural institutions, which authority is responsible for spending such amount and who controls it.

In **Argentina**, it was not possible to provide a concrete answer to these questions, as both national and provincial funds are involved. However, the loan offered by The World Bank, through the PROMER II project, should be mentioned. Such amount is specifically intended for its allocation to rural schools and has the following objective:

“To support Argentina to reduce repetition rates in primary education and increase enrolment in, and completion rates of, secondary education with the aim of improving educational results in rural areas”.

In **Brazil**, there is a budget allocated to rural education exclusively. The Brazilian Federal Education Act – Law No 9.394/96 – sets forth that each educational system must promote the necessary adjustments in order to adapt to the characteristics of rural life and of each region. Moreover, Order No 7353 of 2010 regulates educational policies and the National Programme on Education for the Agricultural Reform (PRONERA, in Spanish), and also establishes that *“the spending of the federal government, through the rural education policies, and PRONERA, shall be targeted to the budget grants annually allocated, respectively, to the Ministries of Education and Agricultural Development, subject to the limits established by the Executive Branch and any legislation on finance matters.”* Finally, the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and Promotion of Professionals on Education (FUNDEB, in Spanish) also offers resources for rural students.

In accordance with Law No 11.494/2007, the Federal Court of Accounts (TCU, in Spanish) is tasked with the supervision of FUNDEB’s resources and its funds. If such funds are also comprised of federal resources, the Comptroller General of the Union is also involved in the supervision. Furthermore, the Attorney’s General Office is charged with the important task of overseeing full compliance with the law. In this respect, it complements the activities of the Federal Court of Accounts and the Comptroller General of the Union by bringing any legal action before the court for any irregularity that could be detected and identified.

Moreover, the law establishes the obligation of the states and local governments to provide evidence of how those resources have been used at three different times: on a monthly, a bimonthly and an annual basis.

In **Mexico**, resources are allocated through an expenditure budget, which changes each year. Regarding rural education, within the budget, there is a special section called “Expenditures for the Comprehensive Development of Indigenous Population and Communities” that received a total of 10,128,113,236.00 Mexican pesos (MXN) in 2018.

In **Spain**, the Autonomous Communities’ general system of financing is established through a multilateral agreement between such Communities and the Government, which guarantees inter-territorial support and a certain amount of expenditure for education as a fundamental public service throughout the Spanish territory. In 2018, driven by the increase in scholarships, the budget for education amounted to 2,600 million euros, which accounted for 60.6% of the budget setting policy. However, the national laws do not provide a particular budget for rural education, therefore it is at the sole discretion of each Autonomous Community to allocate part of the budget to rural education.

The **Australian** Government allocates funds for education in general. There is not any specific distinction made in the budget in relation to exclusive funds for rural education. However, in the allocation of funds for the program Quality Schools, which grants funds to each school, it is indeed acknowledged that schools located in rural or remote areas need more funds, as the education for students in those areas is more expensive. The IRRRRE shows that around 12% of the federal funding to education is granted to rural and remote education.

In **Uruguay**, the national budget does not have a specific section for rural education. The funding for rural education falls within the section of primary education throughout the country. However, in the budget of the National Administration for Public Education (ANEP, in Spanish), an amount is allocated to fund rural schools and to implement programmes and projects administered through the DER.

In the case of **Chile**, there are no statutes on rural education that regulate how the education budget shall be allocated in that area. However, there were sections in the Public Sector Budget Act of 2018 that were specifically allocated to particular aspects of rural education, such as resources to fund projects in rural areas that allowed for student's transportation from their homes to the educational institution where they are enrolled.



IV) ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Access to education, including school infrastructure, access roads and transportation has been analysed in each of the countries studied.

In **Argentina**, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, together with the Federal Council for Education (particularly, the Educational Planning Division), are responsible for ensuring the availability, in all schools, of necessary material resources – infrastructure, scientific and technological equipment, physical education and sport equipment, libraries and pedagogic materials – to guarantee quality education. Moreover, the law sets forth that those schools that provide education for socially disadvantaged students shall be prioritized.

In **Australia**, as well as in Argentina, the planning division of each jurisdiction is directly responsible for ensuring access to infrastructure in schools. However, in this case, they work together with other ministries, such as the Ministry of Health, which also develops strategies to allow remote communities to have access to health services.

In Australia, the laws on education do not establish which authority is responsible for ensuring access to schools in relation to access roads and transportation. This issue is sometimes dealt with by the Government and, if not, by each community or large business in the area. In the past years, the Government has announced some reforms in this respect, but they have not been put into practice yet.

In **Brazil**, the Federal Constitution establishes which authority is in charge of ensuring students' access to the educational material, transportation, meals, and health services, among others matters. This responsibility is distributed between the federal government, the provinces and the municipalities, according to the dependence level of each school. In most cases, the different levels of government enter into agreements to work jointly.

Furthermore, in relation to rural areas, the Ministry of Education, through the FUNDEB, has developed a specific programme to support the transportation service and the maintenance of rural school buildings. This programme is called the National Support Programme for School Transportation (PNATE, in Spanish) and it offers support to the provinces and municipalities.

In **Chile**, there are no legal provisions that expressly govern accessibility to school infrastructure, but rather a governmental obligation on this issue results from the duties imposed on the Government under the General Education Act No. 20.370 of 2009 and the Political Constitution of the Republic of Chile of 1980.

In **Spain**, the national legislation provides, in general terms, mechanisms, especially economic mechanisms to ensure that rural students have access to school. However, the local administrations are in charge of organising, in each jurisdiction, free transportation, meals and housing services, so that the geographical dispersion and communication difficulties do not hinder, under any circumstance, access to basic education.

In **Mexico**, it is the federal education authority which is responsible for developing, maintaining and improving school infrastructure together with all the education authorities. There is a statute called Ley de Infraestructura Física Educativa (Physical Infrastructure for Education Act), which governs the intervention in infrastructure, and a governmental body called Instituto Nacional de la Infraestructura Física Educativa (National Institute of Physical Infrastructure for Education) aimed at guaranteeing compliance with the Act in all schools, considering both urban and rural areas.

Finally, in **Uruguay**, there is no specific authority in charge of ensuring access to schools. However, due to the geographical characteristics and climate conditions in the country, along with the high number of rural schools, access to education is not regarded as a problem.



CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, it is important to highlight that public policies depend on the historical, geographical and social context in which they are issued and, therefore, are addressed differently in each country even though there are a considerable number of institutions located in rural areas in all the selected countries.

In those countries that have a federal system, all government levels work together in the implementation of educational policies. In other words, in Argentina, as well as in Australia, Brazil, Spain and Mexico, the central government is responsible for providing general guidelines, but each jurisdiction (such as municipalities, provinces etc. as appropriate in each case) shall implement the policies. Only in Australia, Brazil and Spain, the central government acknowledges that rural education poses more challenges and for this reason a specific budget is allocated.

In the case of Chile, the central government has regional secretaries throughout the territory, while, in Uruguay, the central government oversees the whole territory. In both cases, rural education is recognised under the law.

In all the countries in the study, schooling is mandatory until the end of what is called secondary level in Argentina. In other words, in all these countries, children below 17 or 18 years old should be able to attend school. On the other hand, the age from which schooling is mandatory ranges from 4 to 6 years old.

There are authorities responsible for guaranteeing the implementation of public policies and students' access to education. The findings related to this point from all the applicable countries can be found below. It should be noted that, in the case of Argentina, although there is no authority responsible for rural areas in the legislative branch, in practice, they can be found in some provinces. In all other cases, the Department of Planning, within the National Executive Branch, imposes general guidelines that must be implemented by the provinces, even though a control mechanism does not exist.

	Responsible authority	Level	Is it particular for rural areas?
Argentina	Provincial Ministries	Provincial	Just in some cases
Australia	Units within states	Provincial	Only when necessary
Brazil	Federal authorities: SECADI and CONEC	Centralized	Yes
Chile	National Coordinator of Rural Education	Centralized	Yes
Spain	Educational Administration of each Autonomous Community	Provincial	Rural education is specifically regulated depending on the jurisdiction
Mexico	Secretary for Public Education, especially the General Coordination of Intercultural and Bilingual Education	Centralized	Yes
Uruguay	Department for Rural Education	Centralized	Yes

Source: Own elaboration

In regard to budget, although there are countries which recognise that rural schools require more funds, only Brazil allocates a specific fund for rural education.

Access to school in most countries is the responsibility of the National Ministry of Education, who works jointly with different levels of government. However, it is important to highlight the Australian practice, where different ministries work together, exerting their best efforts to achieve better results.

Also noteworthy is the Spanish practice of offering financial support to those who live in remote or disperse areas and guaranteeing free transportation and housing services to the students attending schools located in those areas, ensuring that distance does not impede access to education.

Finally, the Argentine practices, which are not always visible, should also be noted. We point out, for example, the existence of free and exclusive school transportation services for students in rural schools in the Provinces of Entre Ríos and Tucumán among other provinces; or the creation of specific spaces for teaching training in some provinces.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of rural education policies implemented in Australia, Brazil, Chile, Spain, Mexico and Uruguay, it could be considered that some practices could also be adopted in Argentina, in accordance with their specific contextual characteristics. Three specific recommendations have been made below.

Firstly, in some of the countries studied, although the central government only establishes general guidelines it is not responsible for implementing them. The central government also acts as a guarantor as it provides funds to local governments for the achievement of their objectives and therefore, controls how those funds are used and allocated. In Argentina, this is not the case, as shown in the research. For this reason, we believe that this may be a mechanism to be implemented by the National Ministry of Education, Culture and Technology in order to guarantee equality in the provinces and as a condition to the provision of funds that are offered by international entities, as is the case of the PROMER project by The World Bank, which is intended to improve rural education.

Secondly, both in Spain and Australia, although there is no specific budget allocated to rural areas, it is acknowledged that those schools that are located far from urban centres require more funds. This means that providing them with more resources to be on an equal footing with urban schools entails greater investment. That is the reason why special consideration is given to the location of the school when it comes to the allocation of funds. This is an important matter to be kept in mind when granting resources to schools in order to ensure that remote schools can obtain the same resources as other schools despite the extra costs that result from the distance (such as scarce services, transportation costs, etc.).

Thirdly, in Argentina, the education services offered in rural areas is lower than in urban areas. This situation is even worse regarding early and secondary education. Therefore, in many cases, students must travel miles to get to school. This situation discourages children and young people from attending early and secondary school respectively, mainly because it entails considerable costs for the families, and consequently, encourages school dropout. In light of this, the solution implemented in Spain is a good way to ensure that students in rural areas can get access to all the mandatory stages of education, from the age of 4 until they finish secondary school. In Spain, any student, regardless of the state where he or she lives, has access to scholarships that cover transportation, meals and housing costs, as necessary. This boosts school continuity and completion of studies. Currently, there are several national and provincial programmes implemented in Argentina aimed at resolving this question, however, the distinct levels of government should work together and make it accessible for any Argentine children or young individual to have access to these programmes, regardless of the province where they live.

The recommendations herein made do not entail great alterations to the existing educational policies in Argentina. Quite the contrary, they are feasible to implement in the short term and could have a large impact on the lives of children and young individuals who live in rural areas. However, this requires the coordination of actions by the applicable levels of government and the responsibility of all the actors involved.



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