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PROJECT PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT REPORT

ARGENTINA

FIRST SECONDARY EDUCATION PROJECT
(LOAN 3794)

DECENTRALIZATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION AND POLIMODAL EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
(SECOND SECONDARY EDUCATION PROJECT)
(LOAN 3971)

THIRD SECONDARY EDUCATION PROJECT
(LOAN 4313)

MARCH 27, 2007

Sector, Thematic, and Global Evaluation Division
Independent Evaluation Group

Currency Equivalents (annual averages)

Currency Unit =(Argentinean peso)

Secondary Education I Project

AR$1 = US$0.5089 (February 2002)
US$1 = AR$1.965

Secondary Education II Project

AR$1 = US$0.33 (October 2004)
US$1 = AR$2.96

Secondary Education III Project

AR$1 = US$ 0.315(February 2003)
US$1 = AR$3.170

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
DiNIECE	National Directorate of Information and Learning Assessment (Dirección Nacional de Información y Evaluación de la Calidad Educativa)
EGB3	Educación General Básica, grades 7-9 (3rd cycle of basic education)
EFA	Education for All
FTI	Fast-Track Initiative to achieve Education for All
GDP	Gross domestic product
IADB	Interamerican Development Bank
ICR	Implementation Completion Report
IDA	International Development Association
IEG	Independent Evaluation Group
MIS	Management information system
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
OAS	Organization of American States
ONE	Operativo Nacional de Evaluación (Nacional Achievement Test)
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAD	Project Appraisal Document
PCU	Project Coordination Unit
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPAR	Project Performance Assessment Report
PHRD	Policy and Human Resources Development
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PROMER	Rural Education Improvement Project
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PREGASE	Provincial Institutional Strengthening Program of the provincial Ministries of Education
PRODYMES	Proyecto de Decentralización y Mejoramiento de la Secundaria y Desarrollo de la Educación Polimodal.(Secondary Education Decentralization and Improvement and Polymodal Education Development Project)
PRISE	Education Sector Reform and Investments Project (Programa de Reformas e Inversiones Sector Educación)
PROMSE	Education System Improvement Program (Programa de Mejoramiento del Sistema Educativo)
OAS	Organization of American States
QAG	Quality Assurance Group
SAR	Staff Appraisal Report
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

Fiscal Year

Government: January 1 — December 31

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IEGWB Mission: Enhancing development effectiveness through excellence and independence in evaluation.

About this Report

The Independent Evaluation Group assesses the programs and activities of the World Bank for two purposes: first, to ensure the integrity of the Bank's self-evaluation process and to verify that the Bank's work is producing the expected results, and second, to help develop improved directions, policies, and procedures through the dissemination of lessons drawn from experience. As part of this work, IEGWB annually assesses about 25 percent of the Bank's lending operations. In selecting operations for assessment, preference is given to those that are innovative, large, or complex; those that are relevant to upcoming studies or country evaluations; those for which Executive Directors or Bank management have requested assessments; and those that are likely to generate important lessons. The operations, topics, and analytical approaches selected for assessment support larger evaluation studies.

A Project Performance Assessment Report (PPAR) is based on a review of the Implementation Completion Report (a self-evaluation by the responsible Bank department) and fieldwork conducted by IEGWB. To prepare PPARs, IEGWB staff examine project files and other documents, interview operational staff, and in most cases visit the borrowing country to discuss the operation with staff of the Bank and the government, other stakeholders, and beneficiaries. The PPAR thereby seeks to validate and augment the information provided in the ICR, as well as examine issues of special interest to broader IEGWB studies.

Each PPAR is subject to peer review and IEGWB management approval. Once cleared internally, the PPAR is reviewed by the responsible Bank department and amended as necessary. The completed PPAR is then sent to the borrower for review; the borrowers' comments are attached to the document that is sent to the Bank's Board of Executive Directors. After an assessment report has been sent to the Board, it is disclosed to the public.

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Risk to Development Outcome: The risk, at the time of evaluation, that development outcomes (or expected outcomes) will not be maintained (or realized). *Possible ratings:* High Significant, Moderate, Negligible to Low, Not Evaluable.

Bank Performance: The extent to which services provided by the Bank ensured quality at entry of the operation and supported effective implementation through appropriate supervision (including ensuring adequate transition arrangements for regular operation of supported activities after loan/credit closing, toward the achievement of development outcomes. The rating has two dimensions: quality at entry and quality of supervision. *Possible ratings:* Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Moderately Satisfactory, Moderately Unsatisfactory, Unsatisfactory, Highly Unsatisfactory.

Borrower Performance: The extent to which the borrower assumed ownership and responsibility to ensure quality of preparation and implementation, and complied with covenants and agreements, towards the achievement of development objectives and sustainability. The rating has two dimensions: government performance and implementing agency performance. *Possible ratings:* Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Moderately Satisfactory, Moderately Unsatisfactory, Unsatisfactory, Highly Unsatisfactory.

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This report was prepared by Helen Abadzi, who assessed the project in August 2006. Pilar Barquero provided administrative support.

Principal Ratings

	*ICR**	*ICR Review**	*PPAR*
Secondary Education I Project (Loan 3794)			
Outcome	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory
Risk to Development Outcome** (Sustainability)	Likely	Likely	Moderate
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Borrower Performance	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Secondary Education II Project (Loan 3971)			
Outcome	Unsatisfactory	Moderately unsatisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory
Risk to Development Outcome** (Sustainability)	Likely	Likely	Moderate
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Borrower Performance	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Secondary Education III Project (Loan 4313)			
Outcome	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory
Risk to Development Outcome** (Sustainability)	Likely	Likely	Moderate
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Borrower Performance	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

* The Implementation Completion Report (ICR) is a self-evaluation by the responsible operational division of the Bank. The ICR Review is an intermediate IEG product that seeks to independently verify the findings of the ICR.
** According to the 2006 harmonization guidelines, sustainability has been replaced with a "risk to development outcome" rating, and a new monitoring and evaluation rating was added.

Key Staff Responsible

	Task Manager/ Leader	*Division Chief/ Sector Director*	*Country Director*
Secondary Education I Project (Loan 3794)			
Appraisal	Luis Pisani	Julian Schweitzer	Ping-Cheung Loh
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Secondary Education III Project (Loan 4313)			
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Preface

This is the Project Performance Assessment Report (PPAR) on three secondary education projects in Argentina.

The Secondary Education I Project (Loan 3794, known as PRODYMES I) was approved for a US$190 million loan in September 1994. The loan closed on June 30, 2001 after extensions totaling 12 months; US$28.8 million was canceled.

The Secondary Education II Project (Loan 3971, known as PRODYMES II), was approved for a US$115.5 million loan in December 1995. The loan closed on June 30, 2004 after extensions totaling 36 months; US$13.2 million was canceled.

The Secondary Education III Project (Loan 4313, known as PRODYMES III), was approved for a US$119 million loan in April 1998. The loan closed on December 31, 2002 after extensions totaling 12 months; US$0.49 million was canceled.

The projects in Argentina were selected for assessment in order to study the challenges of improving learning outcomes in a middle-income country at a time of financial crisis.

The PPAR is based on the following sources: Implementation Completion Reports (ICRs), Staff Appraisal Reports (SARs), Loan Agreements for the projects, and project files, particularly the supervision reports. An IEG mission visited Argentina in August 2006 to interview officials and beneficiaries, observe instruction in schools, and collect other pertinent information. Field visits took place in the provinces of Rio Negro, Mendoza, Misiones, and Buenos Aires. The author thanks the government officials who received the mission for their extensive cooperation.

Following standard IEG procedures, copies of the draft PPAR was sent to government officials and agencies for their review and comments. The Borrower’s response is taken into account in the text and is included as Annex C.

Summary

In the 1990s, Argentina implemented a series of secondary education projects that aimed to expand the provision of this educational level to lower-income populations. These included:

The Secondary Education I Project (Loan 3794, known as PRODYMES I) was approved for a US$190 million loan in September 1994. The loan closed on June 30, 2001 after extensions totaling 12 months; US$28.8 million was canceled.

The Secondary Education II Project (Loan 3971, known as PRODYMES II) was approved for a US$115.5 million loan in December 1995. The loan closed on June 30, 2004 after extensions totaling 36 months; US$13.2 million was canceled.

The Secondary Education III Project (Loan 4313, known as PRODYMES III) was approved for a US$119 million loan in April 1998. The loan closed on December 31, 2002 after extensions totaling 12 months; US$0.49 million was canceled.

All three projects aimed at improving access, quality, and management of secondary education. They were implemented in the midst of a large-scale financial crisis and had to be modified and extended repeatedly. Nevertheless most of the planned project activities were carried out. The projects succeeded in expanding the number of places available for students, in improving retention, and reducing dropout. Schools in low-income areas received improved infrastructure, books, and equipment, including much computer equipment. Staff were trained on the use of the equipment and on better management. Management information systems were put in place to monitor student assessment and teacher data in hopes of reducing expenditures. However, it proved difficult to change some aspects of teacher remuneration, so despite some management improvements, expenditures were only marginally reduced.

Stakeholders interviewed viewed the investments as contributing to improved quality of education, reduced dropout, and school attractiveness for poor adolescents. Schools supported by PRODYMES II and III had encouraging enrollment and dropout indicators. However, test scores in language and math did not improve as expected, and some deteriorated over time. The projects undertook few direct measures to improve instructional delivery. Classroom observations during the mission suggest that instructional time is poorly used due to a lack of a textbook per student, that forces even advanced mathematics students to copy all material from the blackboard and study through photocopies. The time loss and inefficiency resulting from these tasks may account to some extent for the limited learning outcomes that the projects have achieved.

The outcomes of all three projects are rated *moderately satisfactory* in light of high relevance, substantial efficiency and modest efficacy; the learning objectives were generally not fulfilled, and institutional development objectives were only partly fulfilled. Risk to development outcome is rated *moderate*; enrollment expansion has proved resilient over time, but continued benefits from equipment and teacher training are uncertain. Bank and borrower performance were *satisfactory* overall. Quality at entry was satisfactory. The Bank was flexible during the financial crisis, task management was

stable and the projects were supervised frequently. Despite project complexity and counterpart fund restrictions cause by the crisis, the borrower implemented most activities as planned.

This assessment provides a number of lessons for the education sector:

- Argentina may benefit from interventions to maximize student engagement in learning activities and thus increase systemic efficiency and learning outcomes. Policies could include offering textbooks to students and rationalizing teaching hours in schools. Teacher guides to facilitate teachers' work may ensure that basic curricula are covered without stifling the creativity that educators in the country cherish (paras 4.3-4.8).

- Reading skill influences achievement in secondary education, and low reading skills may account for students' failure in schools. Unless students get considerable practice in reading during primary school, they remain slow readers and may be unable to interpret complex text or get through the substantial amounts normally expected in secondary school (para. 4.10).

- Monitoring indicators to track progress towards the attainment of longer term objectives such as improved learning outcomes must be included in the project design; otherwise it may be impossible to evaluate whether changes are attributable to project interventions or the lack incentives to focus on learning outcomes (para. 3.7).

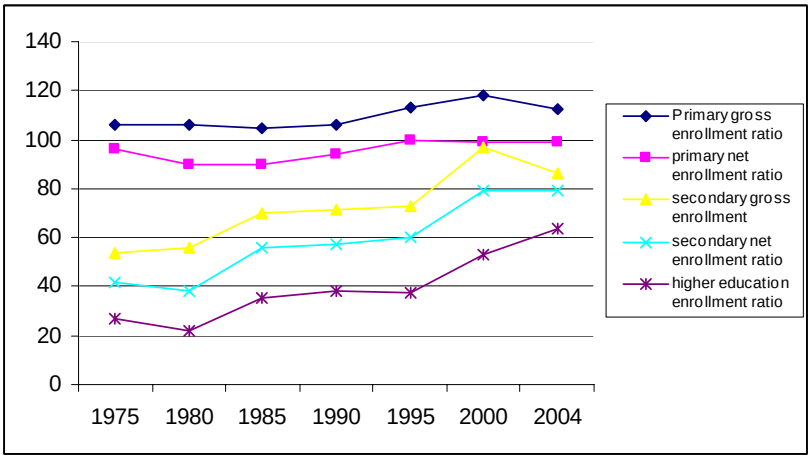
- Decentralization of school management to provinces and municipalities is not a panacea. Unless managers are strong and can effectively supervise and control quality, the poor may receive limited service due to ineffective oversight (para. 4.3).

Vinod Thomas
Director-General
Evaluation

1. Background

1.1 With a per capita income of about US$3720 Argentina has highly educated citizens and one of the most developed educational systems of Latin America in terms of enrolment rates and services to students (Figure 1).[1] Children get services such as school buses, food for the poor, social workers for each grade ("preceptors"), libraries with full-time librarians, opportunities for creative expression, and many after-hours activities. However, the strategy to expand basic secondary education to the poorest has met many challenges in this large country that had in 1994 2.1 million secondary education students (72 percent enrolled in public schools), of whom 24 percent were in technical-vocational tracks. Poorer students were not being sufficiently prepared for competition in the world markets, and often abandoned school with limited employment prospects. In the early 1990s dropout ranged from 65 percent in Rio Negro to 41 percent in La Pampa; in technical schools about 82 percent of the students in Rio Negro and 68 percent in La Pampa dropped out between 1987 and 1992. (Repetition ranged in the early 1990s between 12 and 17 percent).[2] The figures suggested a need to revise curricula, particularly in technical tracks, to meet labor-market needs.

Figure 1. Evolution of educational indicators in Argentina



Sources: PRODYMES I project documents, Edstats (World Bank)

1.2 Assignment and pay of secondary school teachers in most Argentine provinces has some unusual features. School assignment is largely determined by seniority and a set of transparent criteria, but teachers are paid on the basis of teaching hours rather than positions in a school. This often means that teachers have a patchwork of hours to be taught in multiple schools, often 2-6 and cannot easily be supervised. Pay is also largely determined by credentials and seniority, so teachers have few incentives to update their teaching skills or ensure that students know the material. In the early 1990s, information about the real teachers' workload was limited. Classes had about 24-36 students, but student-teacher ratios in most provinces were lower than 12:1, suggesting overstaffing

1. Edstats: Country at a glance, 2005.

2.World Bank, 1991; PRODYMES I Staff Appraisal Report, 1995.

and wastage. Teachers were allowed to be absent on long-term temporary leave or on extended illness without losing their jobs.[3] Short-term assignments by temporary teachers resulted in two or more teachers getting paid for the same work. Intense involvement by the teachers' unions that sometimes turns violent ensured the continuation of the inefficiency.

1.3 To better respond to local needs the national government decentralized primary education to the provinces in 1978 and secondary education in 1992. Curricula were also decentralized to respond to local needs, and schools are allowed to be creative and teach as they see fit on the basis of broad guidelines. So, rather than follow a textbook and teacher guides, teachers typically develop their own syllabi and materials.[4] As a result, a province like Rio Negro may have around 56 different curricula delivered in personalized combinations of photocopies, notes, and library books for primary as well as for secondary education. This characteristic consumes considerable teacher time, and leaves students with an uncertain content structure for various courses.

1.4 A federal law was passed in 1993 that aimed to raise compulsory education from 7 to 10 years (including preschool), changing primary school duration, and reorienting secondary education into a structure of multiple semi-vocational tracks ("polymodal") that would allow graduates to function in different social and labor conditions.[5] It was also important to update curricula and textbooks. Funds were insufficient at the central level to implement the federal law, so the government sought the help of the World Bank. The series of the projects that followed was called PRODYMES (Proyecto de Decentralización y Mejoramiento de la Secundaria y Desarrollo de la Educación Polimodal).

Bank Sector Strategy

1.5 The Bank has strongly supported the government's 1993 federal law and efforts to decentralize and improve management. PRODYMES I financed the implementation of the federal law in six provinces. PRODYMES II financed quality improvement interventions in the classrooms of 630 high-risk lower secondary schools (called EGB3)[6] throughout the entire country; PRODYMES III concentrated on the EGB3 and polymodal schools of the Buenos Aires province that contains one-third of the country's population.

1.6 The PRODYMES were essentially the first education operations to be implemented in Argentina. A Vocational Training and Technical Education project

3. Teachers are paid approximately wages equivalent to 1.45 times the per capita GDP. This percentage is lower than in other LAC countries but approximates the OECD average (Di Gropello 2006, p. 187).

4. Teachers interviewed often expressed a belief that students should construct their own knowledge based on their own prior knowledge and experience, so they are encouraged to learn from materials in the environment and consult multiple sources rather than use specific textbooks on a daily basis (vis-à-vis occasionally for papers).

5. The polymodal level was established in five "tracks" (Humanistic and Social Science; Natural Science; Production of Goods and Services; Economy and Administration; and Communication, Art and Design). In addition, for the technical and agricultural secondary schools only, the polymodal curriculum also included technical professional pathways (Trayectos Técnicos Profesionals or TTPs) in Business Administration, Electronics, Electromechanical, Construction, Agricultural Production, Information Computer Technology and Industrial Processing.

6. The lower secondary grades 7-9 are referred in Argentina as EGB3, educación general básica 3rd cycle.

became effective in 1981, but disbursed less than 2 percent of the loan over its seven-year implementation period. A social sector management technical assistance project devoted some funds to educational planning in 1989-1994, and a higher education reform project (L3921, FY96) was implemented shortly after the effectiveness of PRODYMES I. Upon completion of PRODYMES III, a follow-on project (Second Buenos Aires Secondary Education Project - PRODYMES III-A) has been under implementation in the province of Buenos Aires and is supporting equity, quality of, and access to secondary education services partly through support of about 200 EGB3 schools of extended school day for low income students.[7] A Rural Education Improvement Project (PROMER) was approved in December 2005.[8] (Table A-4).

1.7 *Other donors.* The Interamerican Development Bank (IADB) has implemented two projects in primary and secondary education whose components have overlapped with World Bank projects. During PRODYMES, the IADB Education Sector Reform and Investments Project (PRISE) was implemented.[9] In 2006, the Educational System Improvement Program (PROMSE) was supporting school construction and computers.[10] The two banks have had little contact between them; instead, national and provincial project implementation units (PIUs) have taken the initiative to implement and coordinate the assistance of the two institutions. In addition, UNESCO and the Organization of American States (OAS) have provided technical assistance in management and curricula of various stages of education.

2. Project Objectives and Implementation

2.1 The PRODYMES I and II projects were to finance the implementation of the 1993 federal law in a number of provinces through subsidiary loan agreements. The first project (PRODYMES I) was to cover seven of the 24 provinces that were interested in implementing the federal law, were willing and ready to borrow funds, had little debt and also had implementation capacity. These were Córdoba, La Pampa, Mendoza, Misiones, Neuquén, Río Negro and Santa Fe. Subsequently la Pampa and Cordoba declined due to debt issues but the province of Buenos Aires was included in December 1997.

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7. The components of PRODYMES III-A include: (a) rehabilitation and additional classroom space for basic education grades 7-9 (EGB3) to offer to the poorest urban students a longer school day ("Jornada completa"); (b) provision of pedagogic equipment, and services, such as school libraries, science and language laboratories, and learning material, for innovative implementation of the full time schedule; (c) seminars and workshops to provide support for autonomous school management, and projects in selected EGB3 schools; and (d) support for the project implementation unit.

8. PROMER seeks to reduce social inequality in the rural sector and to improve the coverage, efficiency, quality, and governance of the Argentine education system. Components are (a) improving quality and coverage of rural rducation by (i) improving operating conditions of rural schools; (ii) expanding coverage and improving student promotion flow; and (iii) strengthening line departments at the provincial levels; and (b): Enhancing stewardship capacity of the national government through (i) strengthening line departments at the national level; and (ii) monitoring and evaluation.

9. PRISE (AR0122, FY1995) was to help the integral reform of the educational sector to improve its efficiency, consolidate the process of the educational services and provide basic educational services at primary in rural and urban areas. It was a hybrid operation with a fast disbursement component.

10. PROMSE (AR0176, FY01) supports the expansion of the primary level (years 6 to 14) and facilitates access to the secondary level (years 15 to 18) ensuring higher attendance and promotion rates through quality, relevance and an effective management of the education system.

2.2 PRODYMES II was to cover a second set of provinces that agreed to implement the law. These were Chaco, Corrientes, Entre Rios, Salta, Santa Cruz and Tucuman and the Municipality of the City of Buenos Aires under a decentralized framework. As with PRODYMES I, these provinces were to sign subsidiary provincial loans. After the signing of the Loan Agreement on August 6, 1996, however, the legislative bodies of these provinces did not approve of the loans. Following a 15-month delay in effectiveness, the project was amended. Within the framework of the Federal Education Law, it was to assist 630 high-risk schools throughout the country in the implementation of the EGB3 and polymodal levels. On January 13, 1997, the Board approved a change in the project's original objectives and design. Since there would be no interventions at the provincial level, the original objective concerning the institutional strengthening capacity of the provincial Ministries of Education was deleted (Table 1).

2.3 PRODYMES III was agreed upon and implemented by the province of Buenos Aires in 1998. The central government signed a Loan Guarantee Agreement for the province, a process that resulted in an 8-month delay. The project focused on 198 lower and higher (polymodal) secondary schools that constituted the poorest 10 percent of the approximately 2000 schools in the province. Project implementation experience and results are presented below (Also see Tables A1-A3).

2.4 All three projects suffered delays at startup, due to the complexity of some components, such as the cost and management studies needed to establish a management information system in PRODYMES I. The country was in a period of financial deterioration that culminated in the crisis of 2000. From December 2002 to February 2003, the government defaulted on its international debt, and this led to a temporary suspension on loan proceeds. As a result of these difficulties, the projects underwent 4-6 amendments each and received extensions of the closing date ranging from 12 to 36 months.

2.5 Budgetary restrictions resulted in a lack of available resources previously earmarked for the projects, both from the loans as well as from the counterpart funds. In 1999 US$20 million was cancelled from PRODYMES I , whose total project cost was eventually reduced from US$268.4m to US$213.3m. An emergency plan was also added to distribute packages of durable basic school materials and supplies for high-risk EGB3 and polymodal students in the entire country. In PRODYMES II components were modified to provide more state-of-the-art multimedia technology in schools, train educators in the use of this technology, carry out innovative projects with the materials provided by the project, and strengthen the 24 provincial implementation units that carried out the work. (Many were implementing the IADB PRISE project at the same time and coordinated donor inputs.) In PRODYMES III a high-standard curriculum of international baccalaureate was deleted, basic learning supplies were given to about 1 million low-income students, equipment and furniture was given to 100 additional schools, and 244 rather than 40 technical schools were restructured (Tables A1-A3). In all three projects, proceeds spent on infrastructure increased while those spent on quality of education decreased. There was misprocurement of US$467,000 in PRODYMES I[11],

11. PRODYMES I ICR p. 19.

and financial audits were consistently late, hindering the possibility of taking opportune corrective actions regarding compliance with the loan agreements.[12]

Table 1. Objectives of the Secondary Education Projects

Objectives	*Components*
Secondary Education I Project (PRODYMES I)	
(a) increase student learning in the selected provinces by financing improvements in the quality and efficiency of secondary education; (b) increase/improve physical capacity to serve better the secondary-school aged population; (c) strengthen institutional capacity under a decentralized framework by (i) modernizing sector management, (ii) improving administrative efficiency, and improving productivity.	⇒ Educational quality improvement (US$84.1m appraisal, actual US$27.3m, 12.9% of costs) ⇒ Institutional strengthening (US$48.4m, a national component of US$39.2m at appraisal; actual US$76.6m, 35.9% of costs) ⇒ Infrastructure improvement (US$73.7m appraisal, actual US$95.6m, 44.8% of costs) ⇒ National and provincial coordination units (US$22.7m appraisal, actual US$13.7m, 6.4% of total project costs)
Secondary Education II Project (PRODYMES II)	
Original objectives (a) strengthen the institutional capacity in the Provincial Ministries of Education of the Provinces of Buenos Aires, Chaco, Corrientes, Entre Rios, Salta, Santa Cruz and Tucuman and the Municipality of the City of Buenos Aires under a decentralized framework (deleted); (b) increase the quality and efficiency of secondary education in grades 7 to 9 (known as EGB3) and 10 to 12 (known as polimodal) (c) increase and improve physical capacity of the school's facilities to serve the secondary school-aged population more effectively *Modified objectives:* (a) increase the quality and efficiency of secondary education in grades 7 to 9 (known as EGB3) and 10 to 12 (known as polymodal) in participating schools. (b) increase and improve physical capacity of the school's facilities to serve the secondary school-aged population more effectively.	*Modified components*: ⇒ Improvement of educational resources of participating schools (US$55.5m appraisal, actual US$29.3m, 22.4% of costs) ⇒ Improvement of school infrastructure of participating schools (US$76.1m appraisal, actual US$85.1m, 65.1% of costs) ⇒ Strengthening of institutional and teaching capacity at participating schools (US$24.3m appraisal, actual US$6.6m, 5% of costs). ⇒ Strengthening of the capacity of the national and the 24 provincial project coordination units (US$8.6m appraisal, actual US$9.7m, 7.4% of total project costs).
Secondary Education III Project (PRODYMES III)	
Improve secondary education in grades 7 to 9 (known as EGB3) and 10 to 12 (known as polymodal) in the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Specifically: (a) increase the completion rate of secondary education; (b) improve the learning process at the school level; (c) improve the skills of graduates of secondary schools to facilitate entrance into the labor market.	⇒ Expansion of access to secondary education (US$131.1m appraisal, actual US$145.8m, 90.% of costs); ⇒ Improvement of quality and relevance of secondary education (US$27.4m appraisal, actual US$24.9m, 9.1% of total project costs); Project administration (US$1.5m, actual US$2.5m).

Source: Technical and legal documentation of respective projects. Total project costs appear in Table A-4.

12. Auditoría General de la Nación, 1996, 1997 (project files)

2.6 Despite setbacks, the national and provincial coordination units of the projects were able to catch up and eventually fulfil or surpass most expected targets for delivery of materials, studies, and civil works.

2.7 The IEG mission visited a total of 15 schools in four provinces. All visits were planned in advance by the government, and schools had been warned of the mission's arrival.[13] Classroom instruction was observed to determine how project inputs were used, and segments were videotaped for subsequent study by the mission and counterpart staff. Overall, about 42 government officials and school staff were interviewed regarding project outcomes and impacts.

RESULTS OF THE PRODYMES PROJECTS

2.8 All three projects aimed at improving physical facilities in schools, the quality of education, and institutional effectiveness. This section presents results and evidence regarding efficacy, that is the extent to which project activities and inputs may have contributed to outputs, outcomes, and impacts. The objectives were stated differently in each project (Table 1), but for brevity, similar objectives are treated under one heading. New primary data often could not be obtained, so this section relies on interviews and data reported in the ICRs of the three projects (see monitoring and evaluation section).

Objective: Expansion of access and improved physical infrastructure (Substantial)

2.9 The projects provided a great deal of furniture, equipment and library books. PRODYMES I included multipurpose rooms and multimedia resource centers that were also planned for community use. PRODYMES II provided its 630 target schools with multimedia learning centers, science and computer labs. Under PRODYMES III, sophisticated up-to-date educational equipment and resources were extended in 2001 to all 244 technical and agricultural secondary schools in the province.

2.10 The three projects generally met their physical targets for construction and rehabilitation of school buildings and administrative spaces. Altogether they built and rehabilitated approximately 861 civil works (Tables A1-A3). These included the Ministry of Education offices in the Misiones district, the National Teachers' Library and its annexes, where conservation was provided for old books and furniture. The lower revised targets for PRODYMES II were substantially met; only 561 of the initially 630 planned construction sites required civil works, and all but nine were completed by project closing (Table A-3)

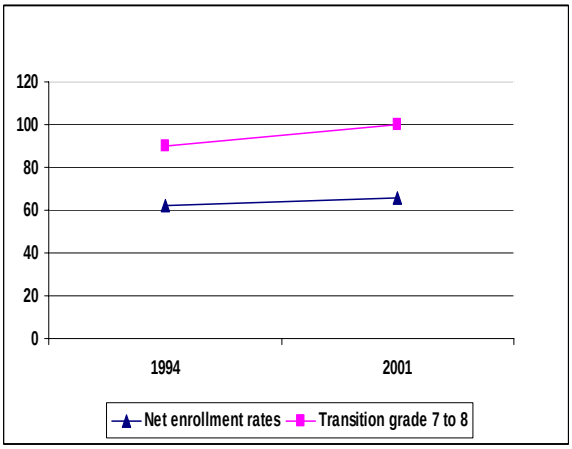
2.11 The building renovations helped accommodate more students. At the end of PRODYMES I, average net enrolment rates in the six aided provinces had increased by four percentage points between 1994 and 2001 (Figure 2), and in the province of Buenos

13. Schools visited: (a) in La Plata: Citibel basica and secundaria (no. 67), (b) in Rio Negro: Centro de educación media #35, Escuela industrial #95 , Escuela primaria #39, Escuela media #27; (c) in Mendoza: Ramponi, Mahatma Gandhi, Guemes , Pascual Iaccarini, Reynaldo Merin, Florencio Casale secondary schools; (d) in Misiones: Escuela Normal superior no. 9 and anexo commercial no. 23, Bachillerato Comun no. 3 Almirante Brown , Escuela primaria Andresito, El Dorado Normal Superior no. 11.

Aires the increase amounted to 20.8 percentage points. The gross transition rate from primary to lower secondary education (grade 7 to grade 8) increased by 9.1 percentage points. In the schools supported by PRODYMES II, enrollment in the upper secondary (polymodal) schools increased by 30 percent in 1997-2002, (from 176,911 to 230,004 students), compared with a 26 percent increase at the national level (from 1,130,096 to 1,424,248 students) and a 23.2 percent increase in a control group. Enrollment increases were particularly noted in the provinces of Catamarca, Chubut, Formosa, La Pampa and Neuquén.[14]

2.12 In the 198 project schools supported by PRODYMES III, 9th grade enrollment increased from 29,780 to 33,758 students (13.4 percent) in 1997-2001, surpassing a target 1.8 percent increase. By comparison, enrollment in the 9th grade in all the EGB3 schools in the province, increased by 9.9 percent during the same period.[15] The ICR completion team also compared the enrollment of the 9th grade in 50 project schools selected randomly and a post-hoc control group of 50 non-project schools of similar socio-economic conditions. Enrollments in the 50 project schools increased by 10.9 percent while in the control group the increase was somewhat lower, 8 percent (Table 2). Completion, transition, and repetition rates improved as expected, and targets were met. The schools visited by the IEG mission had buildings in good condition and principals reported increased eagerness by students and parents for attendance in schools that had a lot of computer materials and better infrastructure. The buildings are heavily used; those in rural areas often have three shifts that include night classes for adults.

Figure 2. Enrollment changes in provinces supported by PRODYMES I



Source: PRODYMES I ICR, p. 7

2.13 It is likely that the extra materials and better state of the buildings attracted more students to the refurbished schools. However, it is not possible with the existing data to attribute increased enrolments solely to the availability of space vis-à-vis migrations into the province. The enrolment trends of the schools supported by the PRODYMES projects could not be followed up because no monitoring data were gathered beyond project completion.

14. Data from PRODYMES I ICR p. 8, PRODYMES II ICR p. 10-11

15. Enrollment in the province increased from 222,182 to 244,214 students during the project period while target was 240,000 students. (PRODYMES III ICR p. p10).

Table 2. Dropout, promotion, and repetition rates of schools supported by PRODYMES II

	Project schools			Control group			National average		
	1997	2001	difference	1997	2001	difference	1997	2001	difference
Repetition rates									
EGB3	16.7	11.8	4.9	12.4	11.3	1.1	9.7	8.5	1.2
Polymodal	8.2	6.7	1.5	6.7	5.2	1.5	6.4	5	1.4
Promotion rates									
EGB3	62.2	70.5	-8.3	89.4	78.8	10.6	75	78.9	-3.9
Polymodal	77.7	78.5	-0.8	79.6	80	-0.4	77.7	78.5	-0.8
Dropout rates									
EGB3	11.9	9.7	2.2	8.4	5.4	3	9.5	7.4	2.1
Polymodal	4.4	5.1	-0.7	4.3	4	0.3	6.4	8.6	-2.2
Polymodal enrollments	176,911	230,004	53,093	154,457	190,271	35,814	1,130,096	1,424,248	294,152
Learning achievement (1997-2000)									
language	56	51.5	4.5	59.5	51.5	8	65.2	59.1	6.1
Math	52	53.7	-1.7	55.4	57.6	-2.2	62.3	63.1	-0.8

Source: PRODYMES II ICR p. 10-11

Objective: Improved Quality of Education: (modest)

2.14 Staff in the national and provincial project implementation units were uniformly of the opinion that the three PRODYMES really focused on infrastructure and equipment rather than quality, and the ICR of PRODYMES I states so.[16] However, PRODYMES I explicitly aimed at increasing learning in the selected provinces, PRODYMES III aimed at improving the learning processes in supported schools, while PRODYMES II aimed at increasing quality and efficiency of secondary education. Efforts were made to find evidence of learning outcomes at the school, province, or national levels.

2.15 *Teacher training*. As Tables A1-A3 show, many teacher training activities took place. In PRODYMES II, for example, an assortment of training courses related to learning inputs were provided to about 33,000 teachers in the 630 project schools. Training included methodological demonstrations, use of the multimedia, computer and science labs. According to staff interviewed, computer instruction had a sizeable impact on learning, with many teachers having learned to operate computers for school use.[17] Training generally took place during school hours, with students doing other activities while teachers went to workshops. However, outcomes on learning of methodological subjects are unknown. Typically, teachers were merely required to attend but were not penalized for absences. They did not have to show what they had learned, and there has been no assessment on the extent to which learning has been used in class. In a focus group conducted by the ICR mission (p. 11-12) PRODYMES III teachers who had participated in courses considered the quality and relevance of training for school

16. The PRODYMES I ICR,(p.6 and 8), states that the borrower did not sufficiently invest in either the design or the implementation of the learning-oriented components to achieve the learning objective.

17. Under PRODYMES II, 92 percent of the teachers said that they habitually use computers, 81 percent to prepare classes and work; 49 percent said they download information from the internet. (Galarza and Pini 2002).

managers and teachers inadequate, partly due to shortcomings in the institutional environment.

2.16 *Curricular reforms*. PRODYMES I and III emphasized curricular reforms of EGB3, polymodal, and technical schools. Officials and school staff interviewed stated that indeed curricula have been reformed and guidelines have been issued. Courses and tracks are offered according to the new polymodal curricula, and national guidelines have been adjusted to local needs. Extensive teacher training has been conducted on new curricula. However, there has been little monitoring of the extent to which courses in fact adhere to new curricula, and whether teachers have implemented new objectives in class. Many teachers work in multiple schools, and administrators cannot supervise them adequately. (See issues section.)

2.17 *Textbook use*. The projects distributed millions of books, workbooks, and curricular guides to schools, some of which had few if any before implementation. The PRODYMES I appraisal documents stated that the textbooks were to be procured either for distribution to the students or for the libraries.[18] Some provinces (such as Mendoza) earlier used to distribute books to students, but under PRODYMES I it was decided to keep the books in the schools and lend them to students only briefly. To ensure a broad choice of sources for students to consult, libraries received a few copies by each of three or four authors rather a single textbook per subject sufficient for all students. This policy has continued in other government programs, such as the scholarship and reading plans. Thus, students have no textbooks of their own. (The directors interviewed were of the opinion that students could not afford to buy textbooks that cost around US$10 each.) If books are needed, teachers ask volunteers to bring a pile to the class to use in groups and return them to the library at end of the period. To compensate for lack of textbooks, much classroom time is spent in copying tasks. First the teacher copies on the blackboard, then the students. Then teachers must ensure that students' notebooks are complete and without errors.

Figure 3. Students carrying textbooks from the library during class time

Source: Author, Iaccarini agricultural school, Mendoza

2.18 The PPAR mission found libraries full of textbooks, that are often very good and replete with diagrams and explanations. However, many were unused, particularly those

18. PRODYMES I Project appraisal document, p. 30.

for which libraries only have a few copies. More likely to be unused were science and math textbooks, possibly because students are too far behind to read them. Some of the staff interviewed thought that the Bank could have paid more attention to book use and to related instructional outcomes. (See issues section.)

2.19 *Innovative projects.* To demonstrate the use of equipment, about 499 school-based innovative projects were financed under PRODYMES II on a competitive basis from 850 proposals submitted by 562 project schools. In about half of the project-supported schools the students and teachers formed working teams and carried out innovative projects.[19] These included hydroponic gardens, microenterprise development of selling foods, monitoring of environmental conditions, collecting and analyzing statistics, biotechnology, various types of community action.[20] According to qualitative data collected by supervision missions during school visits and evaluation studies, learning inputs provided by the project (including computer and laboratory equipment) facilitated the delivery of the science curricula. On the downside, the project created the need for technicians to support teachers and raised recurrent expenditures.

2.20 Staff interviewed by the mission raised concerns that the equipment provided by PRODYMES II has proved expensive to maintain. Trained teams of teachers were created, but these were soon dissolved due to normal teacher movements. And because training was centralized, there was little understanding of where to go and what to do in order to keep a trained cadre in place. The areas that had more money to keep these items going did better. So in fact the project may have exacerbated differences among schools.[21]

2.21 *Learning outcomes.* To document learning outcomes, the following information was available in the ICRs:

2.22 PRODYMES I supported the development of achievement tests conducted by the National Direction of Information and Learning Assessment (DiNIECE) since 1995. These tests are based on samples that only occasionally included the schools supported by the projects. For PRODYMES I baseline data were limited,[22] and learning outcomes were sparse and not available for all states.[23] The provinces that benefited from PRODYMES I investments showed significant improvements in math scores (except in the province of Buenos Aires), but reductions in language scores between 1995 and 2000 (Table 2). Since more province-level information is unavailable it is difficult to conclude that the projects were responsible for the increases or reductions.

19. Garza and Pini 2002, Proyectos Innovadores 2004.

20. Proyectos innovadores 2004.

21. Galarza and Piri 2002.

22. A 1992 survey of 1,000 students in Buenos Aires showed that on a scale of 0 to 6, 82% of students scored under 3 and 22% scored 0 in math. In Spanish those proportions were 49% and 15% respectively. However, these baseline data offered in the appraisal documents of PRODYMES I were not comparable to subsequent measures.

23. The government considers province-level averages confidential and did not release them to the PPAR mission.

Table 3. PRODYMES I Provincial Learning Performance Indicators

PROVINCE	Buenos Aires		Mendoza		Misiones		Neuquen*		Río Negro		Santa Fe		Average (simple)	
Years	95	00	95	00	95	00	95	00	95	00	95	00	95	00
Spanish scores in 9th Grade (2nd of EGB3)	60.7	50.4	58.7	53.1	45.3	43.5	56.9	56.6	57.0	54.8	54.7	55.6	55.5	52.3
Math scores in 9th Grade (2nd of EGB3)	56.0	52.7	52.1	57.7	32.6	44.1	51.7	59.8	49.4	59.6	49.2	62.2	48.5	56.0

*The latest data for Neuquén is for the year 1999
Source: DiNIECE, Ministerio de Educación de la Nación, 2001.

2.23 In schools that benefited from PRODYMES II, learning achievements have been disappointing. Between 1997 and 2000, learning achievement in project schools decreased and math achievement slightly increased, while a control group and the national average showed the same pattern.[24] However, PRODYMES II schools showed favourable changes in dropout, promotion, and repetition rates from 1997 to 2001 (Table 2).

2.24 PRODYMES III specifically aimed at improving learning processes at the school level. Directors interviewed by the mission were of the opinion that teaching practices have improved and that technical schools provide more relevant skills. However, achievement test outcomes do not show clear evidence of a relationship. Project schools scored slightly above the provincial average in language and math in 2001 at the end of the polymodal level, but an appraisal target of 68 percent correct responses was not achieved (Table 4). Nevertheless, these schools had lower grade repetition and managed to keep more students in the system. Feeder schools were organized at the EGB3 level for higher-level studies as well as a fellowship program established in the province in 1999. Improved physical conditions may also have been responsible for increased retention of students in schools.

Table 4. PRODYMES III comparative outcomes

	Project Schools (%)			Post hoc control group 50 non-project schools (%)			Provincial average (%)			Original Target (%)
Impact Indicators	**1998**	**2001**	**Difference**	**1998**	**2001**	**Difference**	**1998**	**2001**	**Difference**	
Transition rate from EGB3 to polymodal	88	98.1	11.5	88	94.4	7.27	93	97.1	4.4	98
Polymodal completion rate	14	53.7	283.6	14	49	250.0	18.5	50.2	171.4	50
Language test scores in third grade of polymodal school		56.9			53.5			55.2		68
Math test scores in third grade of polymodal school		59.7			58.2			58.9		68
Repetition rates	15.6	6.6	57.3	15.7	13.2	15.9	15.6	13	16.3	7

Source: PRODYMES III Implementation Completion Report p. 8. A post-hoc comparison was made between randomly selected 50 project schools with 50 non-project schools with similar socioeconomic characteristics, and with the totality of schools in the province.

2.25 The project also aimed at reducing the students' job search time by 30 percent. Given the financial crisis and an unemployment rate of 18 percent it was not possible to reach this target or evaluate the outcome. No tracer studies were conducted after the end

24. PRODYMES II ICR p. 10-11.

of the project. Also linkages between project schools and the private productive sector were not fully realized due to labor market crisis. Only about 50 percent of the schools established some linkages.

Strengthening management capacity (modest overall)

2.26 In each of the projects the management focus was slightly different. PRODYMES I heavily invested in the development of databases and systems to improve management information and decisionmaking. These included a national management information system to provide information on educational statistics, infrastructure, and human resources; a national student assessment system to monitor achievement nationwide, a financial and administrative system to expedite financial transactions and procedures; and a post-graduate training program for managers, and province-level action plans to overcome inefficiencies in the use of human resources (Table A-1).

2.27 Despite complexities, the government carried out extensive surveys as well as a school census. Computerized systems were developed to track personnel, payments, and student data, some of which have become sustainable (such as PREGASE – Provincial Institutional Strengthening Program). As a result, the provincial governments that use them are more competent in collecting information about their systems. For example, they are better able to keep track of staff and resources and stop salaries on time when temporary teachers end their work, thus preventing double and triple payments. However, the impact of the information has been somewhat limited because Ministries of Education are not always able to convert information into savings. One reason has been the opposition by teacher training unions to stricter guidelines on issues such as paid lengthy leave periods or the dismissal of teachers found to break rules. Staff interviewed by the mission stated that they had become aware of inefficiencies as a result of the information systems and been able to act on some occasions (such as when teachers overbilled the system), but they were largely unable to make substantial changes.

2.28 As a result, overall management-related indicators had not changed substantially at the end of PRODYMES I. (Table A-5; updated data were unavailable.) For example, the ratio of teaching and non-teaching personnel out of total provincial education budget in the six provinces remained the same between 1994 and 2000, but the ratio of non-personnel expenditure increased somewhat in the same period from 6.4 to 8.1 percent. The ratio between teaching and non-teaching personnel decreased notably in some states (such as Rio Negro) but overall showed little change. This suggests that provinces continue to have unnecessary personnel that they are unable to release.

2.29 PRODYMES II initially aimed at strengthening institutional capacity in participating provinces. This objective was deleted and is not used for rating the outcomes of this project. Nevertheless, the programa de Reforma de la Gestión Administrativa de los Sistemas Educativos Provinciales (PREGASE) developed for PRODYMES I financed some activities in PRODYMES II. By the end of the project, the provinces of Catamarca, Córdoba, Chubut, La Pampa, Neuquén, Río Negro, Salta, San Luis and Santa Fe had achieved all the targets set for them by PREGASE, including: (i) a teacher roster used for monthly payroll; (ii) functional organic layout and guidelines for each school in the province; and (iii) means to update the information system in real time

on teachers concerning transfers, hiring and termination of employment. Some states did not agree to implement PREGASE, but through this activity some of the targets (such as teacher payroll updates) were subsequently achieved under PRODYMES I and II. The management lessons derived from PRODYMES II have been published.[25] However, in most provinces PREGASE seems to have replaced programs that were functional.[26]

2.30 PRODYMES III focused on improving management capacity at the school level under quality of education (Table A-3). An important means for doing so was the Programa de Fortalecimiento Educativo Institucional (PROFEI) that provided consultant with school-level planning advice for administrators. In addition, PROFEI staff conducted extensive training that was also extended to non-project schools. Focus groups during the ICR mission and interviews during the PPAR mission suggest that many staff found these useful, but training was not always relevant to daily work, particularly training provided by universities.[27] Furthermore, school-level management has not been decentralized or strengthened as expected because directors continue to have little discretion over budgets and teacher appointments. After the end of the project, the Buenos Aires province has continued to implement various management initiatives, including a student identification card that can enable electronic registration of attendance and reduce the number of 'preceptors' needed for this task.

2.31 PRODYMES III management indicators agreed at appraisal included a 10.8 percent increase in government expenditure on education, an increase in expenses for goods and services in education from 2.8 to 4 percent, a decrease in administrative expenses from 7.48 to 6.98 percent, and a decrease in cost per secondary education graduate.[28] Due to the financial crisis, these goals have not been met.

3. Ratings

Project Outcomes

3.1 Project objectives were *highly relevant* in the 1990s and remained relevant in 2006, as reflected in the 2006 Country Assistance Strategy (CAS). Particularly relevant are the attempts to rationalize budgets and expenditures, given Argentina's continuing vulnerability to economic shocks.[29] Also improving labor market relevance remains important, given the high unemployment and uncertain returns to earlier forms of technical education.[30]

25. 'Itinerarios de Gestión en el Uso y en la Generación de la Información 2004.

26. Garza and Pini 2002.

27. PRODYMES III ICR p. 11.

28. Per pupil expenditures in Argentina amount to 19 percent of the per capita GDP (Di Gropello 2006, p. 262).

29. Argentina: Building a Skilled Labor Force for Sustained and Equitable Economic Growth", 2006.

30. Argentina Country Assistance Evaluation. Report no. 200719, July 10, 2000.

3.2 Clearly, the projects delivered a great deal of inputs to schools and provincial education ministries. Schools supported by the projects seem to have become more efficient in terms of maintaining students and preventing dropout. The implementation process has been relatively *efficient* in financial terms. For example, civil works under PRODYMES III cost US$532 per square meter compared to US$600 estimated at appraisal. Despite the cancellation of US$20 million from PRODYMES I, important project components to be carried out with reduced funding. However, *efficacy* has been modest. The increased access and capacity objectives were met, and targets of increasing transition and reducing repetition and dropout were also largely met. Sustained efforts were also made to improve management, particularly in PRODYMES I. Nevertheless, these systems had little long-term impact in improving management and systemic efficiency. Data at the provincial and national levels could not be obtained, but interviews with teachers showed that many continue to work at 3-6 schools, and inquiries at schools visited showed absenteeism rates of about 12-15 percent. In some provinces teachers are permitted to be absent for several days a year, to attend seminars during school hours, and to take long medical leaves. And unions may go on lengthy paid strikes that reduce the schooling available for the poor but are rarely fired. The government has been unable to curb the political power of teacher unions that are against many of the needed changes.

3.3 Finally, the projects did not meet their learning targets (Tables 2-4). In PRODYMES I, a possible reason was that instructional materials and equipment were only provided towards the end of the project, and there may have been little time for inputs to create outcomes. The schools supported by PRODYMES II and III became better able to attract and keep students but still they did not show consistent improvements in test scores. But the PRODYMES appraisal documents show no plan or clear line of causality leading from the provision of materials and training to learning outcomes. Therefore, after procuring materials, training, and curriculum development, little attention was paid on how these inputs were used and whether they were used to deliver information efficiently in class. One notable example was the provision of textbooks just for libraries, which results in much instructional time wastage. Despite official statements of objectives about improving educational quality or learning objectives, there was little attention or direct investment towards this goal. Given high relevance, substantial efficiency, and modest efficacy, the outcome of all three projects is rated *moderately satisfactory*. [31]

Risk to Development Outcome

3.4 Overall, the risk that the development outcome will not be maintained is rated *moderate* for all three projects. The management information systems have survived beyond the end of PRODYMES I, infrastructure is sustainable, and the equipment given to schools by all projects is used for instructional purposes. However, some issues raise concerns. Equipment maintenance is expensive, and there is a concern that the poorer

31. The region had rated the outcome of PRODYMES II as unsatisfactory because OED Implementation Completion Report Evaluation Guidelines (dated June 30, 1999) stated that if an approved project was restructured because of faulty project design or poor implementation so that its original objectives could not be achieved, the assessment of outcomes should be related to the original objectives. This rule has been changed, and the project was rated according to a combination of original and revised objectives.

schools may be least able to afford it. The impact of teacher training on classroom learning is uncertain. Many teachers who learned to work in teams changed schools, and the teams dissolved without replacement or extra training after project end. Similarly many innovative projects of PRODYMES II benefited only one cohort of students because most cannot be reproduced without project funds.

Bank Performance

3.5 Overall, Bank performance for all projects is rated *satisfactory*. The institution was flexible during the financial crisis, task managers were stable and supervised the projects frequently. Quality at entry was satisfactory, given the fact that little was known during appraisal about the financial difficulties that the projects would encounter. The Bank paid much attention to hardware and to management activities. However, it paid limited attention to learning outcomes and the means that the projects would use to bring them about inside the classroom. Instead, Bank staff trusted the Argentine educators' expertise, but for important decisions such as limiting textbook distribution to libraries, no data existed to inform decisions.

Borrower Performance

3.6 Overall, borrower performance is rated *satisfactory*. Despite the financial crisis, project complexity, and the multiplicity of project implementation units, staff were dedicated to the work at the central and at the provincial levels. In interviews with the mission, many stated that they had learned the methods of project implementation and that they valued this knowledge which enabled them to plan actions in advance, link various activities in order to produce outcomes, and modify plans according to budgetary priorities. Thanks to the projects, the project implementation units carried out cost studies and wrote terms of reference, thus clarifying what tasks various positions were to undertake. On the negative side, the borrower did not establish a clear chain of causality linking learning outcomes to project inputs. Decisions on instructional methods and classroom time use were based on national philosophical trends rather than evidence from studies.

Monitoring and Evaluation Design, Implementation, and Utilization

3.7 Monitoring and evaluation design is rated *modest* for all three projects. The project documents included monitoring indicators and baseline measures on a number of variables related to inputs, but they did not include an evaluation design that would make it possible to document their effects, particularly on student learning. No quantitative impact evaluation was undertaken for PRODYMES I; the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning carried out a stakeholder workshop and field survey, whereby parents and students were asked about the perceived impact of project inputs. PRODYMES II had a qualitative evaluation that mainly described project events, relied on information from focus groups, and did not discuss learning outcomes.[32] This and other project documents did not contain a line of reasoning showing how inputs would

32. The authors of the evaluation were Galarza and Piri. 2002.

result in learning outcomes. There has been little monitoring of student test scores during the life of the projects. There was no achievement information collected for students specifically in schools supported by PRODYMES II or PRODYMES III; some project-supported schools were sampled by the national achievement tests (Operativo Nacional de Evaluación - ONE), but the assessment was not systematic. It is arguable that the projects strengthened computer knowledge and knowledge of skills useful for the labor market rather than language and math. They may have also improved student self-esteem. If so, specific tests could have been administered to find out, but they were not.

3.8 At the end of the PRODYMES III, a subset of schools was randomly selected for comparison with a set of matched controls. But such post-hoc comparison could not clarify whether increases in school enrolment were due to the project effects, to movement of better students into schools with more desirable equipment, or other population movements. Teacher knowledge or application were not assessed, and teachers were considered trained following mere presence in courses.[33] Also the relevance of the teacher training courses was not ascertained.

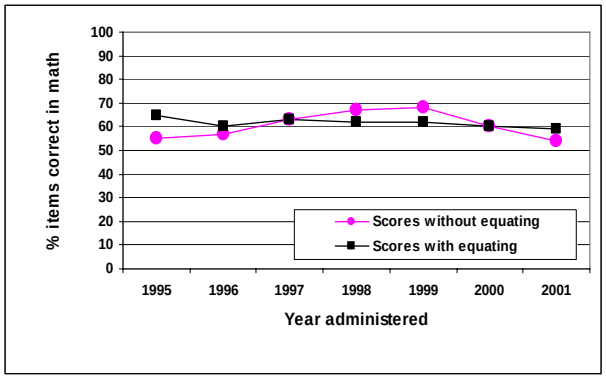
3.9 Efforts are made at the national level to inform sampled schools about the ONE test score results, help them interpret them and take corrective action. However, schools seem to pay little attention to the information. When asked during PPAR mission visits, some directors were unable to find the scores or to show how test results had changed at their school over time. One reason may be the limited control directors have over teachers, who may be unavailable for meetings and specific corrective action given their duties in multiple schools.

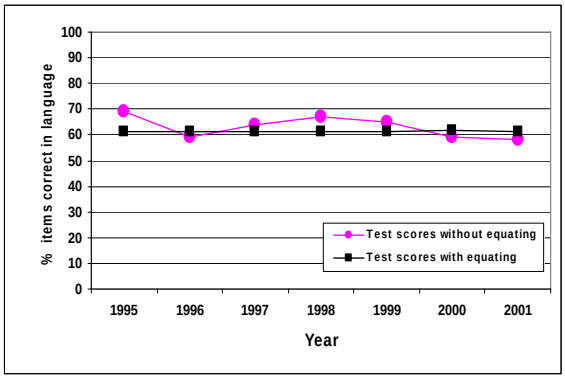
4. Issues and Prospects in Sectoral Strategy

4.1 *No learning improvements despite efforts.* Schools in Argentina focus on children's physical and emotional well-being and many extracurricular and artistic activities, partly to prevent dropout. But overall, learning outcomes in Argentina have remained stable in the past decade (figures 4 and 5), even at the time of the financial crisis. Government staff expressed concern to the mission because despite all the investment in teacher training, equipment during the PRODYMES and other projects, national test results show no improvement.

33. e.g. Galarza and Piri, 2002, p. 64.

Figure 4 and Figure 5. National sample-based achievement test results in math and language, last year of secondary school (1995-2001)





Note: Efforts were made to equate test scores from one year to the next, but trends remained the same

4.2 The PRODYMES projects have focused on indicators of management efficiency at the macro level. However, little or no attention has been paid to inefficiencies at the classroom level. Observations by the PPAR mission suggest some interlinked factors that if attended to may improve learning outcomes.

Curricular autonomy, accountability, and use of classroom time

4.3 As mentioned in Chapter 1, teachers have the freedom to teach what they see fit within broad guidelines ("nuclei of priority content"), and each school develops its own 'pedagogical proposal'. According to some staff interviewed during the mission, curricular variety and autonomy in teaching are considered a strength of the Argentine system. It has been expected that this freedom would encourage teachers to be creative and offer extra material to students. But to develop their own syllabi, teachers integrate material from various sources and do not have the option to adhere to teacher guides that typically accompany textbooks.[34] Curricula are in effect developed by about 700,000 teachers. In courses like language, the material to be covered depends completely on the teacher, and students have trouble transferring from one school to the next within the same province or across Argentina.

4.4 Predictably this is a time-consuming task in its initial phases, for which secondary teachers are not paid, and often requires making and handing out photocopies. One consequence of this curricular freedom is that teachers may choose to cover limited material. Some stated to the PPAR mission that they do so because students' social circumstances do not permit a faster pace.[35] This limited coverage, particularly in math, is a source of concern for some provincial government officials.

4.5 The large variety of syllabi means that students cannot use a single textbook and structured material for study at home and in class. This is the case even for advanced

34. For example, the mission interviewed a teacher who had decided to teach logic during a psychology course and was seeking help with books, since she only had one old textbook. The Borrower's response (Annex C) considers the figure of 700,000 teachers developing their own curricula exaggerated but does not offer more specific data.

35. Some teachers mentioned to the mission that students could not perform because economic factors somehow affect classroom performance, but little emphasis was placed on instructional factors controlled at the school.

courses, such as 12th grade mathematics. Students are expected to study from photocopies, from books in the library, and their notes. But notes constitute very little material that may be less easily remembered,[36] and students may make errors copying complex formulas.

4.6 *Poor use of instructional time*. This curricular retailing process results in inefficient use of instructional time. Teachers copy on the blackboard and students must recopy, while some students must go to the library, get piles of textbooks, distribute them, collect them, and take them back to the library. (Also librarian positions are needed.) Since there is only one book for every three or four students, work in groups during class is obligatory in order to solve problems or read a text and answer questions. Inevitably there is much social interaction, which teachers often ignore, as well as a high noise level that has been shown in international studies to reduce the recall of material. But constant group work is also inefficient because according to research, because mainly harder assignments benefit from group deliberations. [37] All these practices result in reduced instructional time and may be less efficient means of imparting skillss.[38] For example, instead of solving eight problems in a math period (of 40 minutes), students chatting and copying material may only solve four. Experienced teachers who interacted with the mission stated repeatedly that contents have been reduced over the years and that what used to be covered in four hours may require six hours with these practices.

4.7 *Very limited teacher supervision.* In principle, teacher supervision should uncover inefficiencies in the use of classroom time, but in reality secondary-education teachers are rarely if every supervised. Schools of 700 students usually have about 120 teachers who usually work a few hours in each. Normally the vice-principal is in charge of quality control but cannot observe the instruction of so many people.[39] And since teacher evaluation in most provinces has little or no effect on pay and rise in the seniority-based rank system, there is little incentive to teach the nuclei of priority content, learn the content of teacher training workshops, or teach what has been learned to the students. So, the large investment in training has not curbed inefficient teaching practices. But since teacher training is largely done during school hours, it reduces students' instructional time, and ironically may further reduce efficiency.

4.8 Overall, the curricular autonomy that was meant to enhance creativity seems to result in inefficiency and limited instruction. The situation also poses a measurement problem. Students cannot be tested in the same material, since everyone learns something different. Low test scores at the national level may reflect the lowest common curricular denominator. However, a new national law is expected to integrate and rationalize the many school programs in existence. It is hoped that structured material with teacher guides and single textbooks for students can be established. Teachers should

36. For a research review on notetaking and noise effects on learning, see Abadzi 2006, Annex B.

37. For reviews of this research see Abadzi 2006, chapter 14 and annex B.

38 See Kirchner et al. 2006.

39. Argentine teachers must be observed for an entire hour, and then there must be appropriate follow-up for which schools have no time. However, there are techniques like the '3 minute supervision' that some provinces could adopt (for a review see Abadzi 2006, chapter 15).

certainly be able to rearrange content and give extra topics to students but it may not be wise to delete material and put low-income students at risk of failure.

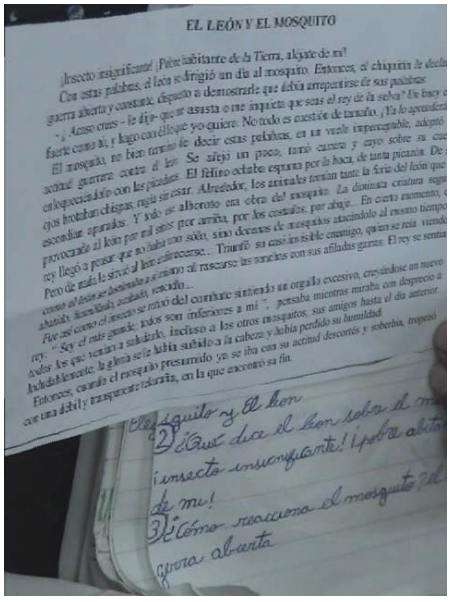
4.9 *The perils of decentralization when management is weak.* National assessment data have been used to analyze the impact of the decentralization reform on student performance in public schools. The findings suggest that on average decentralization improved the performance of public-school students' test scores.[40] However, the impact of decentralization on public students' performance seems negative for schools located in poor areas or in provinces with weak administration.[41] Another Bank study suggests that autonomy and parental participation enhance students test scores, but do not do so if participation levels are low.[42] PPAR findings seem to illustrate the perils of decentralization when management is weak. Though teachers have broad autonomy to teach as they see fit, schools have limited authority over financial resources and staff behaviors. In short, curricula have been decentralized to the lowest level possible while the system has limited ability to oversee implementation.

Limited reading skills in secondary school

4.10 Dropout early in secondary education has been an issue of concern in Argentina. Some studies suggest that students drop out in the 7th grade because the material becomes complex and they have not yet learned to read well.[43] The PPAR mission observed students read haltingly through the middle of grade 4 and unable to read fast enough a page from a textbook during group work in grade 8. This problem may be due in Argentina to the limited reading materials students receive from grade 1, so they may not increase their speed to 120 words per minute in grade 3 or 180 in grade 4, as they would be expected.[44]

4.11 Limited reading achievement may be partly due to limited attention to individual student responses. The teachers observed by the PPAR mission interacted only with the students willing to respond, so weak students might remain unnoticed for years. Student misbehaviour, which schools actively try to overcome with extracurricular activities, may be to some extent due to the inability to do the required work. It may be useful to measure reading speed and accuracy across grades and remedy with after-hours classes the reading skills of low-scoring secondary education students.

Figure 6. Fourth-grader studying from a photocopy



Source: author, Citibel elementary school, La Plata, Buenos Aires Province

40. Galiani and Schargrodsky 2001.

41. Galiani, Gertler and Schargrodsky 2005 (Cited in World Bank 2006).

42. Eskeland and Filmer 2002.

43. SIPEC 2006.

44. For reading norms see Abadzi 2006, chapter 5.

4.12 *Textbooks - options for a book for every student.* Teachers interviewed by the PPAR mission overwhelmingly preferred using a single textbook that all of their students could have. It is possible that only a fraction of the students can afford to buy textbooks that cost US$10 or that library books will be destroyed if given to students. But textbook cost for those who cannot afford them is a minor item compared to the expenditures involved in the Argentine school system. Provinces may be able to lend books to the students who cannot pay the full price and recover costs of replacements through rental fees, revolving funds, and exchanges among school libraries that have unused copies of some editions. There also seems to be an untapped fundraising potential of parent cooperatives and students' activities; funds are often raised for school trips and purchase of photocopiers, so they could be raised for textbook replacements. Communities could be made aware of this need.

4.13 One reason cited for the policy of giving libraries a few copies of textbooks by many authors was book choice and a concern that publishers might bribe teachers with free books to use their editions. However, textbook choice may not be a panacea. It is unclear whether book choice improves learning, but experience in eastern Europe suggests that it may increase educational expenditures because publishers are likely to have smaller book runs to print.

4.14 Given the inefficiency that is caused in instructional time use due to a lack of textbooks, it would seem that a new policy regarding their distribution and use would be a priority.

Instructional Efficiency and Labor Market Outcomes

4.15 The shape of the learning proficiency distribution today may be a harbinger of the profile of labor market productivity tomorrow**.** It is useful for countries to decide whether to focus their marginal investments on reducing the number of young people performing at the lowest levels of proficiency, increasing the number performing at highest levels, or raising the performance of the bulk of the students in the middle of the distribution. With the advent of the 2000 economic crisis, the government clearly focused on the lower end, of sustaining enrollment gains and preventing students from dropping out rather than academic excellence. However, concern over average achievement and labor market competencies suggests that its strategy is changing. But its ability to change the shape of the learning proficiency distribution depends on its capacity to improve learning outcomes, particularly in the short to medium term.

4.16 In 1997 Argentina participated in a regional study of student achievement administered by the Latin American Laboratory for the Assessment of Quality in Education. Students in grades 3 and 4 were the second highest performers in language and math (the highest being Cuba). However, in PIRLS, which tested the reading performance of fourth graders in 2001, Argentina ranked 31st out of 35 participating countries. In PISA 2000, where 15-year olds are tested in mathematics, reading, and science, Argentina ranked 35th out of 41 participating countries.[45] Only 15-year olds

45. PISA reports on the proportion of 15-year-olds attaining each level of proficiency in mathematics, reading and communication, and science.

from Chile, Brazil, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Indonesia, and Albania had lower PISA scores in reading than Argentina.[46] It is useful to analyze the findings of international assessments to examine trade-offs as the country pursues education goals. If a country has not been very successful at training students to achieve high levels of proficiency (say at levels 4 through 6 on the PISA mathematics proficiency scale), it would be correspondingly difficult to train and recruit teachers capable of educating students to achieve at the highest proficiency levels.

4.17 One means of understanding in greater detail how curricular, teacher employment, and textbook policies impact learning may be to conduct detailed observational studies on how instructional time is used. These would include measurement of time spent in activities such as group work and researching topics in various books in relationship to the amount of material learned and retained over a 6-month period. Thus, the optimal amounts of group work and consultation of multiple sources can be determined for various grades. Also, several countries have undertaken video studies comparing teaching strategies and time use in schools that scored high and low on the TIMSS (Trends in Mathematics and Science Studies). Argentina has twice administered this test, but due to financial strictures during the crisis, the tests were never scored. The government may find it useful to score these curriculum-based tests, compare performance in greater detail with other countries, but also assess through video studies what cognitive competencies students are taught vis-à-vis those of other countries that have done such studies.[47]

5. Lessons

5.1 This assessment provides a number of lessons for the education sector:

- Argentina may benefit from interventions to maximize student engagement in learning activities and thus increase systemic efficiency and learning outcomes. Policies could include offering textbooks to students and rationalizing teaching hours in schools. Teacher guides to facilitate teachers' work may ensure that basic curricula are covered without stifling the creativity that educators in the country cherish (paras 4.3-4.8).

46. World Bank 2006.

47. In TIMSS video studies, class sessions have been videotaped and procedures coded for activities used teach math and science concepts. In the U.S. that scored low, students were more often taught definitions, practiced routine procedures, and learned specific rules rather than the underlying rationale. In the higher-scoring Japanese schools, students learned the principles that would enable them to solve complex problems, and they often connected abstract math topics to historical discoveries and real-world use. Problems solved in class were linked, creating a coherent knowledge structure. Teachers also asked students to memorize rules that they immediately put into practice. Deductive reasoning (math proofs) were used in 53 percent of Japanese classes and not at all in the U.S. classes. The study may also demonstrate the effect of distractions and noise level on consolidation; Japanese classes were never interrupted, while 31 percent of U.S. classes were interrupted for extraneous reasons. Seatwork in both countries accounted for about 40 percent of class time; but in the low-scoring U.S., seatwork consisted of 96 percent practice, 3.5 percent application, and 0.7 percent inventive thinking, whereas in Japan seatwork time consisted of 41 percent practice, 15 percent application, and 44 percent thinking (Sigler and Hiebert 1999, p. 71).

- Reading skill influences achievement in secondary education, and low reading skills may account for students' failure in schools. Unless students get considerable practice in reading during primary school, they remain slow readers and may be unable to interpret complex text or get through the substantial amounts normally expected in secondary school (para. 4.10).

- Monitoring indicators to track progress towards the attainment of longer term objectives such as improved learning outcomes must be included in the project design; otherwise it may be impossible to evaluate whether changes are attributable to project interventions or the lack incentives to focus on learning outcomes (para. 3.7).

- Decentralization of school management to provinces and municipalities is not a panacea. Unless managers are strong and can effectively supervise and control quality, the poor may receive limited service due to ineffective oversight (para. 4.3).

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Annex A. Implementation of project components

Table A-1. Secondary Education I Project (PRODYMES I, Ln. 3794)

Components/ subcomponents	***Activities***	***Targets to be achieved***	***Outputs***	***Outcomes Info obtained during mission***
Institutional Strengthening				
Province level	More efficient administrative organization with simpler norms and procedures	Training for 8000 admin. staff and educators 300 computers	Inputs to the program and training activities were reduced	Computer usage has increased among educators
	Educational and financial programming budgeting capacity	Training, materials, per diems for over 3200 senior staff	Management studies were conducted that had limited impact	Insufficient contribution and impact. Used by Ministry to expedite some transactions
	Management information and student assessment systems	Training 700 operators, policy analysts, planners Training 1000 school directors and supervisors; 1140 computers; Fares, per diems	Workable and sustainable systems were developed. Linked uncoupled provincial information systems with the center. Extensive surveys included a national census of school infrastructure	The systems are used for monitoring, though budget limitations impede regular updating of some data. Most provinces delegated assessment to the national Ministry of Education
	Education costs and provincial sector productivity studies	To provide a cost model and estimate the costs of the reform, including staffing requirements and salary schedules	29 cost studies conducted with respect to the administrative financial system and action plans	Limited impact. Studies not disseminated adequately or used to rationalize the cost of the education systems at the national and provincial levels
National level	Establish national education information system and national student assessment system	Training for 11,500 mangers, planners, operators; 40 fellowships and study tours, 200 computers	Final number of trainees unknown Practical and sustainable systems were developed	The systems are used for monitoring and decisionmaking
	Training and upgrading of educational administrators and technical staff	Post-graduate training: 200 high-level staff 180 study tours Training for 640 students 5 in-country graduate programs	About 1265 technicians and officials attended 62 local courses; 410 persons attended 95 international courses. About 25 staff got scholarships for local universities, 126 went abroad	About 70% of trainees returned to their positions. Impact of additional skills unclear. The scholarship program was discontinued for budgetary reasons
	Institutional reform of Provincial Ministries of Education (PREGASE)	Component modified to reengineer regulations and processes to and improve organizational structure and administrative activities	Computer equipment given in 16 provinces; 10,000 staff were trained to develop a single personnel roster, medical leave authorization, payroll and compensation, school mapping, building inventory	Easily available and updated information resulted in savings (e.g. 6% of monthly payroll in Salta). Program extended to 23 of the 24 provinces, recurrent expenditures paid by the National Ministry of Education
Quality Improvement				
	Textbooks selection from short lists, contract new if needed	3.5 million either to libraries or to students individually	Textbooks kept in libraries rather than be given to students directly; fewer available than needed	Though textbook benefits are large, the limited provision has impacted education negatively
	Didactic material and equipment	420 basic science labs, 125 science-related modules; over 2000 libraries; over 5000 teacher guides; over 1000 sets of maps, charts, dictionaries; 130 TVs, video recorders	Material provided according to reduced targets	Materials delivered and used in classrooms
	Staff training in subject matter and teacher methods by universities	40,000 teachers 1000 directors and supervisors,	Targets reduced, exact number of trainees unknown Attendance sufficient to	Impact uncertain. Unknown if and what teachers learned and if knowledge used in

Components/ subcomponents	***Activities***	***Targets to be achieved***	***Outputs***	***Outcomes Info obtained during mission***
		100 coordinators	pronounce staff trained	class
	Informatics	3000 computers 400 printers and educational software	Material delivered to schools as planned	Computer classes regularly take place in PRODYMES schools
	Curriculum development; studies to evaluate the impact of prior curricula Curriculum development training	TA for specialists 300 staff months local 20 staff months foreign Training for 2000 teachers	Curricular frameworks prepared by national Ministry adapted for provincial needs and school requirements; training programs for management, supervisory and teaching staff to implement the new curricula	Training programs were absorbed by the national Ministry's Federal Network for Continuing Teacher Training
	School grants 1-year duration	900 grants of about US$9000 each	Amounts reduced	Outcomes uncertain
Infrastructure construction, expansion and rehabilitation	construction, expansion, rehabilitation of secondary educational schools, and provincial Ministries of Education	20 new schools Rehabilitation of 130 in poor areas Expansion 40 schools Completion of 5 schools	196 works were financed : 31 new schools, 152 rehabilitated Physical target met	Buildings overall in good condition, with staff expressing satisfaction about their quality
	Construction of regional and local administrative facilities.	7 regional centers in 4 provinces, Rehabilitation of 2 regional centers	5 renovated administrative offices, 3 new administrative buildings National Teachers' Library renovated, conservation provided for old books and furniture	Buildings overall in good condition, with staff expressing satisfaction about their quality
	An inventory of national MOE facilities and preparation for rehabilitation	US$190,000 TA 50 computers, communications equipment	Inventory conducted	Few decisions were made on the basis of the inventory
National and Provincial Project Coordination Units	Equipment, operating expenditures and training in project management as needed	Office rentals, insurance, utilities, publications, fares and per diems, promotion, and bidding expenses	Despite budgetary restriction, the implementing units were able to function adequately	National and provincial project implementation units were able to carry out their work as needed

Source: Project documents and information obtained during the PPAR mission

Table A-2. Secondary Education II (PRODYMES II, Ln. 3971)

Components/ subcomponents (revised)	*Activities*	*Targets to be achieved*	*Outputs*	*Outcomes Info obtained during mission*
Improvement of educational resources of participating schools				
	Provision of library materials	multimedia centers, library books, maps, educational CD-ROMs, videos, videocassette, televisions and projectors	Delivered 630 multimedia learning centers, 137,340 books, 12,450 sets of educational videos and materials, 214,930 sets of pedagogical kits	Delivery targets largely achieved Material used by schools for instruction
	Provision of computers	Computer laboratories with 8 state-of-the-art computers, one server and six printers per laboratory	630 computer laboratories 5040 computers	Delivery targets largely achieved Material used by schools for instruction
	Provision of laboratories	Natural science and technology laboratories.	630 science labs Technology laboratories were deleted	Delivery targets largely achieved Material used by schools for instruction
improvement of school infrastructure of participating schools	Construction and rehabilitation of classrooms for educational resources of EGB3, polymodal levels	630 buildings	561 required civil works, 552 were completed by project closing	Buildings overall in good condition, but in two of the schools visited staff expressed concerns about low quality of materials and early damages that require help by parents' groups
	Sets of basic durable school supplies distributed to primary and secondary students in high-risk areas	No initial targets set cost US$10 per package	Distributed to about 986,500 students of 4763 schools and to 2,088,387 students in 14,652 preschools and primary schools.	Reportedly the materials enabled students to continue in school
	The piloting of a high standard international baccalaureate	5 project schools	Not undertaken because of financial constraints.	No impact
Strengthening of institutional and teaching capacity at participating schools	training of teachers, and administrators in the appropriate utilization of the educational resources acquired by the project	Training teachers of the 630 project schools on learning inputs, teaching methods, use of multimedia, computer and science labs.	Trained about 33,000 teachers in 630 schools	Targets met. Staff in schools reported that they learned how to use the multimedia equipment and computers and do so regularly.
;	Grants for design and implementation of school-based institutional development and innovation projects	To be conduced by school teachers and principals of participating schools.	About 499 school-based innovative projects were financed on a competitive basis from 850 proposals submitted by 562 project schools.	Projects were one-time events that benefited students but cannot be reproduced without new funding. Sustainability unlikely
	Implementation of PREGASE (see PRODYMES I)	teacher payroll updates and improvements in the management information system.	9 provinces completed means to monitor and update their payroll on a regular basis	Prompt initiation and end of staff payments have resulted in savings and prevention of some teacher problems that had constituted substantial budgetary drains
Project coordination and execution.	strengthening of the capacity of the national and the 24 provincial project coordination units.		Despite budgetary restriction, the implementing units were able to function adequately	National and provincial project implementation units were able to carry out their work as needed

Source: Project documents and information obtained during the PPAR mission

Table A-3. Secondary Education III Project (PRODYMES III, Ln. 4313)

Components/ subcomponents	*Activities*	*Targets to be achieved*	*Outputs*	*Outcomes Info obtained during mission*
Expansion of Construction of classrooms to accommodate the 9th grade of junior secondary school (EGB3, gr. 7-9)	Classroom construction To increase students from 216,000 to 240,000	Total 4474 EGB buildings, including 1336 new classrooms in 200 targeted polymodal schools	Due to effectiveness delays the province paid for EGB3 schools. Targets reduced to construction of 83 new polymodal schools (about 669 classrooms), rehabilitation of 21 schools, (107 classrooms)	Total 1076 classrooms built or rehabilitated Construction cost US$26,800 per polymodal school vs. US$24,250 per EGB3 school US$532 per square meter vs. US$600 at appraisal
	School rehabilitation, construction of bathrooms	1755 EGB3 schools adopting the federal law standards	Rehabilitation with province funds during the project due to effectiveness delays	Schools in use full-time
	Technical school equipment	69 basic modules of equipment installed and functioning	Equipment given to all 244 technical schools	According to reports by principals interviewed, equipment is largely used on a regular basis
	Introduction of the polymodal curriculum in 40 technical schools, provision of up-to-date educational/learning equipment and resources	Materials for technical and agricultural secondary schools (target extended in 2001 to the universe of schools)	Polymodal curriculum introduced; equipment and resources given to 244 technical and agricultural secondary schools	Curricula successfully introduced Delivery targets largely achieved Material used by schools for instruction
Quality and relevance improvement	Institutional strengthening at the school level (PROFEI)	Train 100% of provincial supervisors (268) Train 80% of principals (198 principals and 198 vice principals)	1144 workshops for 8892 teachers and managers for 198 project schools and 705 non-project schools Additional benefits of 42 workshops to 2575 stakeholders	3 focus groups highly commented on PROFEI efforts to translate reform objectives into concrete pedagogical actions
	(ii) Educational resources and teacher training for technical schools		350 technical teachers trained	Teachers express a rather negative opinion of quality and relevance of the training
	(iii) Extra curricular activities for youth	25% of student population participating 50% of programs to foster community participation	30% of student population participated Preparation of 483 youth proposals, 287 approved and 217 implemented	Reportedly relations between students and authorities significantly improved (baseline unknown)
	School-based management strengthening through PROFEI; reform role of supervisors	200 underprivileged polymodal schools. Train 268 provincial supervisors, 198 principals, 198 vice-principals	1,144 workshops for 8,892 administrators, including 42 workshops for 2,575 administrators in 705 non-project schools	Training was not sufficiently linked to school activities, targeting criteria were unclear Staff had negative opinion about the relevance of training
	Plan to increase collaboration with labor market;	graduate follow up donations from firms	Follow-up not carried out	No impact
Project administration	Equipment, operating expenditures and training in project management as needed	Office rentals, insurance, utilities, publications, fares and per diems, promotion, and bidding expenses	Despite budgetary restriction, the implementing units were able to function adequately	National and provincial project implementation units were able to carry out their work as needed
	Use of parents' help in project execution (cooperadoras de padres)	Cooperadoras were to receive checks and pay contractors for civil works	Some experience was successful, but few parents were able to participate at the required level	The parents' cooperatives repair schools in many areas and are responsible for small budget items

Source: Project documents and information obtained during the PPAR mission

Table A-4. Secondary Education Lending in Argentina

Completed Projects	*Project ID*	*Approval FY*	*Closing*	*Loan no.*	*Ln. amt*	*Project Cost US$m*	*Canceled US$m*
Technical/Vocational Project	P005938	1981	06/30/1988	1905	58	145	56.8
Secondary Education Project I	P005992	1995	06/30/2001	3794	190	268.7	28.7
Secondary Education Project II	P006057	1996	04/30/2004	3971	115.5	164.5	13.8
Secondary Education Project III	P050714	1998	12/31/2002	4313	119	170	0.5
Higher Education Reform Project	P005991	1996	06/30/2004	3921	165	271.7	29.5
Second Secondary Education Project	P064614	2001	03/31/2008	4586	57	173.8	
Rural Education Improvement Project	P070963	2006	10/31/2011		150	244.6	
Total					854.5	1,438	129.3

Table A-5

TABLE 4.1 PROVINCIAL IMPACT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

	Buenos Aires		Mendoza		Misiones		Neuquén		Rio Negro		Santa Fe		Average (simple)	
	94	00	94	00	94	00	94	00	94	00	94	00	94	00
INTERNAL EFFICIENCY														
1. Secondary education net enrollment rates (%)	61.6	74.4	NA	71.3	NA	49.8	70.9	74.5	57.8	63.2	50.1	51.3	60.1	64.1
2. Gross transition rate from 7th to 8th grade (%)	91.7	95.0	90.6	98.9	86.1	97.0	89.3	100	91.5	96.0	90.8	107	90.8	98.9
3. Repetition rates (%)														
First grade (8th)	11.8	5.0	16.4	13.7	11.4	9.0	19.0	21.2	24.7	22.4	10.2	12.8	15.6	14.0
Second grade (9th)	14.8	7.5	19.4	15.5	16.7	10.6	20.7	22.3	23.0	18.6	12.3	13.4	17.8	14.7
Third grade (10th)	11.0	5.0	13.3	11.1	12.3	10.5	16.9	18.0	15.0	10.5	9.3	9.2	13.0	10.7
Fourth grade (11th)	6.2	5.0	8.4	5.3	6.8	5.1	10.9	10.8	11.2	8.1	5.0	4.6	8.1	6.5
Fifth grade (12th)	2.1	4.0	2.2	1.3	1.7	1.1	2.4	1.8	1.6	0.5	0.9	0.8	1.8	1.6
INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING INDICATORS														
4. Number of student places per school shift in PRODYMES I secondary schools (thousands)	15.9	17.4	8.1	10.9	11.4	13.4	24.5	28.7	6.2	10.1	108.	111	174	191
FINANCIAL INDICATORS														
5. Expenditure ratio of substitute teachers as percentage of total expenditure on teaching staff in EGB3 and polimodal cycle (%)	10.2	6.7	30.0	31.2	17.8	13.8	16.8	15.1	23.4	25.7	15.0	11.4	18.9	17.4
6. Expenditure ratio of teaching and non-teaching personnel out of total provincial education budget (%)	90.1	92.2	96.8	93.4	92.1	90.3	86.9	91.2	98.2	81.0	97.3	96.9	93.6	90.8
7. Expenditure ratio of teaching and non-teaching personnel out of total provincial education budget in EGB3 and polimodal (%)	98.3	87.9	97.8	89.5	99.9	94.6	89.7	93.2	98.2	79.8	98.5	97.2	97.1	90.3
8. Ratio of non-personnel expenditure out of total provincial education budget (%)	9.9	7.8	3.2	6.6	7.9	9.7	13.1	8.8	12.2	12.4	2.7	3.1	6.4	8.1
9. Ratio of administrative and technical personnel expenditure out of total provincial personnel expenditure in the education sector (%)	16.1	12.4	9.0	8.4	9.1	9.6	3.7	4.6	16.1	8.2	1.7	2.0	9.3	7.5

Source: IDECE, 2001
ECSE. Costs studies based on provincial executed budgets for 1994 and 2000.

Annex B. Basic Data Sheet

SECONDARY EDUCATION I (LOAN 3794)

Key Project Data *(amounts in US$ million)*

	Appraisal estimate	*Actual or current estimate*	*Actual as % of appraisal estimate*
Total project cost	268.67	213.23	79.36
Loan amount	190	161.32	85
Cancellation		28.7	

Project Dates

	Original	*Actual*
Board approval	09/15/1994	09/15/1994
Signing	03/24/1995	03/24/1995
Effectiveness	01/01/1995	08/18/1995
Closing date	06/30/2000	06/30/2001

Staff Inputs (staff weeks)

	Actual/Latest Estimate	
	N° Staff weeks	*USUS('000)*
Preappraisal	9.1	19.7
Appraisal/Negotiation	194.0	392.0
Supervision	66.0	227.0
ICR	8.4	34.5
Total	277.5	673.2

Mission Data

	Date (month/year)	No. of persons	Specializations represented	Performance Rating	
				Implementation Progress	Development Objective
Identification/ Preparation	May 17, 1992	2	One education economist, one education specialist		
	October 25, 1992	4	One education economist, one education specialist, one financial analyst and one architect		
	May 14, 1993	4	One education economist, two education specialists and one financial analyst		
	August 15, 1993	2	One education economist and one education specialist		
	October 4, 1993	10	One project implementation specialist, two education specialists, two education economists, one learning assessment specialist, one architect, one financial analyst, one costing and procurement specialist, and one operations assistant		
	January 11, 1994	2	One project implementation specialist and one education specialist		
Appraisal/ Negotiation	March 7, 1994	9	One project implementation specialist, two education specialists, one education economist, one lawyer, one disbursements officer, one architect, one financial analyst and one costing and financing specialist		
	July 15, 1994	9	One project implementation specialist, one lawyer, one disbursements officer, one accounting and auditing specialist, one education specialist, one education economist, one financial analyst, one costing and financing specialist and one operations assistant		
Supervision	March 1996	3	Two education specialists and one human resource economist	S	HS
	July 1996	4	One education specialist and three education economists	U	S
	June 1997	4	Four education economists	S	S
	October 1997	2	Two education economists	S	S
	April 1998	5	Two education specialists, one social sector specialist, one procurement specialist and one economist	U	S
	November 1998	7	Three education economists, one social sector specialist, one education specialist, one program officer and one operations specialist	S	S
	March 1999	9	Two education economists, two education specialists, one technical education specialists, one project implementation specialist, one social development	S	S

	Date (month/year)	No. of persons	Specializations represented	Performance Rating	
				Implementation Progress	Development Objective
			specialist and two operations assistants		
	September 1999	5	Two education economists, one education specialist, one project implementation specialist and one social development specialist	S	S
	January 2000	2	One education economist and one education specialist	S	S
	May 2000	4	One education economist, one education specialist, one social development specialist and one operations assistant	S	S
	August 2000	4	Two education specialists, one project implementation specialist and one social development specialist	S	S
ICR	August 2001	7	Two education specialists, one project implementation specialist, one institutional strengthening specialist, one education economist, one financial management specialist and one procurement specialist	S	S

SECONDARY EDUCATION II (LOAN 3971)

Key Project Data *(amounts in US$ million)*

	Appraisal estimate	*Actual or current estimate*	*Actual as % of appraisal estimate*
Total project cost	164.50	130.70	79.45
Loan amount	115	102.37	89
Cancellation		13.8	

Project Dates

	Original	*Actual*
Board approval	12/21/1995	12/21/1995
Signing	08/07/1996	08/07/1996
Effectiveness	01/31/1996	03/12/1997
Closing date	06/30/2001	04/30/2004

Staff Inputs (staff weeks)

	Actual/Latest Estimate	
	N° Staff weeks	*USUS('000)*
Preappraisal	84.1	294.40
Appraisal/Negotiation	21.3	74.0
Supervision	96.0	336.00
ICR	12.5	47.3
Total	213.9	752.3

Mission Data

	Date (month/year)	No. of persons	Specializations represented	Performance Rating	
				Implementation Progress	Development Objective
Identification/ Preparation	May 16, 1994	1	Pre-identification led by an education specialist		
	June 27, 1994	4	Identification led by an education specialist, and including one principal operations officer, one human resource economist and one costs and procurement specialist		
	August 8, 1994	1	Preparation of the economic studies led by an education economist		
	August 29, 1994	8	Preparation led by an education specialist, and including one principal operations officer, one educator, one human resource economist one cost and procurement specialist, one school architect, one education economist and one economist		
	December 5, 1994	9	Pre-appraisal led by an education specialist, and including two principal operations officers, one educator, one human resource economist, one cost and procurement specialist, one school architect, one economist and one operations assistant		
Appraisal/ Negotiation	April 4, 1995	10	Appraisal led by an education specialist, and including one principal operations officer, one educator, three human resource economists, one cost and procurement specialist, one school architect, one economist and one operations assistant		
	October 20, 1995	5	Negotiations led by the lawyer and the task team leader (educator), one procurement specialist, one disbursement specialist and one human resource economist		
Supervision	June 24, 1996	2	Task team leader (human resource economist), one education specialist	S	S
	August 26, 1996	1	Task team leader (human resource economist),	S	S
	November 15, 1997	4	Task team leader (human resource economist), one education specialist, one procurement specialist and one operations assistant	S	S
	March 3, 1997	2	Task team leader (human resource economist) and one education specialist	S	S
	November 07, 1997	3	Task team leader (human resource economist), one education specialist and one education economist	S	S
	April 30, 1998	5	Task team leader (human resource economist), one social	S	S

	Date (month/year)	No. of persons	Specializations represented	Performance Rating	
				Implementation Progress	Development Objective
			sector specialist, one procurement specialist, one education economist and one education specialist		
	November 6, 1998	7	Task team leader (human resource economist), three learning resources specialists, one education specialist, one social specialist, and a project assistant	S	S
	March 26, 1999	4	Task team leader (human resource economist), one senior education specialist, one education consultant, and one team assistant	S	S
	September 3, 1999	3	Task team leader (human resource economist) and two consultants	S	S
	January 24, 2000	2	Task team leader (human resource economist) and one principal education specialist	S	S
	May 19, 2000	5	Task team leader (human resource economist), the LCC7C social sector leader, one principal education specialist, one social development specialist and one operations assistant	S	S
	July 31, 2000	6	A task team leader (principal education specialist), one project implementation specialist, one social development specialist, one education specialist, one procurement specialist and one operations assistant	S	S
	April 27, 2001	1	Task team leader (principal education specialist)	S	S
	December 11, 2001	1	Task team leader (principal education specialist)	S	S
	May 27, 2002	5	Task team leader (principal education specialist), one project implementation specialist, one social development, one education specialist and one procurement specialist	S	S
	December 6, 2002	1	One task team leader (lead education specialist)	S	S
	August 24, 2003	1	One task team leader (lead education specialist)	S	S
ICR	March 22, 2004	6	A task team leader (lead education specialist), one education specialist, one human resource economist, one school architect, one procurement specialist and one financial management specialist	S	S

SECONDARY EDUCATION III (LOAN 4313)

Key Project Data *(amounts in US$ million)*

	Appraisal estimate	*Actual or current estimate*	*Actual as % of appraisal estimate*
Total project cost	170.00	173.20	101.09
Loan amount	119	118.5	99.5%
Cancellation		0.5	

Project Dates

	Original	*Actual*
Board approval	04/09/1998	04/09/1998
Signing	11/16/1998	11/16/1998
Effectiveness	07/01/1998	12/23/1998
Closing date	12/31/2001	12/31/2002

Staff Inputs (staff weeks)

	Actual/Latest Estimate	
	N° Staff weeks	*USUS('000)*
Preappraisal		
Appraisal/Negotiations		280.44
Supervision		258.85
ICR		23.80
Total		563.09

Mission Data

	Date (month/year)	*No. of persons*	*Specializations represented*	*Performance Rating*	
				Implementation Progress	*Development Objective*
Identification/ Preparation	August 8, 1997	6	One education economist, one education specialist, one technical education specialist, one social sector development specialist one procurement specialist and a project assistant		
	October 1997	6	One education economist, one education specialist, one technical education specialist, one social sector development specialist, one procurement specialist and a project assistant		
Appraisal/ Negotiation	December 1997	7	One education economist and task team leader, one lawyer, one financial management specialist, one disbursement officer, one procurement officer, one social sector development specialist and one team assistant		
	February 1998	7	One education economist and task team leader, one lawyer, one financial management specialist, one disbursement officer, one procurement officer, one social sector development specialist and one team assistant		
Supervision	October 26, 1998	6	Two education economist, one education specialist, one	S	S

	Date (month/year)	No. of persons	Specializations represented	Performance Rating	
				Implementation Progress	Development Objective
			technical education specialist, one social sector development specialist and one program assistant		
	March 15, 1999	5	Two education specialist, one technical education specialist, one social sector development specialist and one team assistant	S	S
	September 3, 1999	4	Two education specialists, one economist and one social sector development specialist	S	S
	April 3, 2000	8	One education specialist, one technical education specialist, one project implementation specialist, one social sector development specialist, one school management specialist, one procurement officer, one financial management specialist and one operations assistant	S	S
	December 4, 2000	5	One education economist, one social sector development specialist, one school administration consultant, one procurement specialist, and one financial management specialist	S	HS
	August 13, 2001	3	Two education specialists and one project implementation specialist	HS	S
	December 10, 2001	1	One education specialist	S	S
	May 31, 2002	4	Two education specialists, one project implementation specialist and one procurement specialist	S	S
ICR	December 13, 2002	6	Two education specialists, one project implementation specialist, one architect, one financial management specialist, and one procurement specialist	HS	HS

Annex C. Borrower Comments (translation from Spanish original)

Comments on the Argentina Projects Evaluation Report

The "independent" evaluation format allows the authors of the report to disregard the commitments based on such principles as institutional autonomy and the preparation of institutional projects (in the Innovative Projects database) and decentralization, which originally underlie the loans granted, and therefore to feel free to be guided by other criteria. Thus, the report takes the liberty of pointing out what are, in its view, negative aspects of curricular autonomy: the neglect of quality objectives and decentralization constraints.

1. The Report presents two core conclusions and one strategic approach. The conclusions are that the three World Bank projects achieved, to a reasonable extent, the broader access-to-education objectives, but not the objectives related to higher-quality learning processes for male and female students. One of the conclusions asserts that the enhanced management capacity objective pursued in the projects and, in particular, in the institution-building component of PRODYMES I (which, according to the report, met its objectives), had only a moderate impact on institutional management efficiency and, hence, on learning processes.

The strategic approaches are set forth in Section 4, based on detection of the following issues: (a) excessive "curricular freedom," whereby each teacher can design his or her own study plan; (b) as a result of this excessive freedom, a lack of study materials, especially schoolbooks and structured teaching aids; and (c) insufficient substitution of schoolbooks and study guides with photocopies, blackboard copies, group work with books borrowed from the library, and the students' own notes. These arrangements detract from learning time because copying, group discussion of assignments, mistakes in the data, and so on take time and thus leave less time for the actual learning process. A number of lessons are drawn from these issues, some explicit, others not. One explicit lesson is the need to step up efforts to enable each pupil to have his/her own books. Implicit lessons point to the likelihood of new directives, such as a policy of reducing teachers' curricular autonomy and stronger recommendations in favor of curricular standards.

It is worth dwelling on this Section 4 because it is here that the report becomes analytical and makes pedagogic suggestions. The "excessive curricular freedom" argument is moot. According to the report, "Indeed, approximately 700,000 teachers draw up study plans. In some subjects, such as language, the contents taught depend entirely on the teacher, and pupils have problems when they move to a new school in the same province or country." This assertion is, if not tendentious, then, at the very least, exaggerated. It is true that emphasis on the Institutional Educational Project (*IEP*) and institutional autonomy has accentuated dependence on the context of what is taught, but the above assertion assumes that the teachers' resources are infinite and ignores the reproductive part played by school grammar, the role of teacher training, and that of transmission mechanisms in the exercise of the profession. Studies at the primary school level suggest that variation

in the contents, materials, and teaching techniques is less than what might be expected, given reported levels of curricular autonomy (Finocchio…).

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the report underscores a particular feature of the Argentine educational system as it has evolved since the 1960s. Palamidessi (2004) calls this feature the generalization of composition and points to the shift from the study program as a regulatory tool for establishing fixed contents and learning times to the curriculum as a matrix generating standards, values, and procedures to be developed by the teacher in the classroom.[48] Although the author describes this as a feature of primary schools, it is conceivable that it applies also, with certain modifications, to the first years of secondary school. It might therefore be interesting to inquire into the relation between this feature and trends referred to in works by, for instance, Tiramonti (2005) and Gallart (2006), regarding the adaptation of contents to the "public" found in each institution and the effects of the fragmentation or segmentation induced by those trends.

Although the report draws questionable conclusions from its observations, it is important, in my opinion, to dwell on this point: an observation regarding quality and the only one that the report analyzes from a pedagogical perspective. Indeed, according to the evaluation, "curricular freedom" leads, among other things, to a teaching practice based on the scant availability and use of written texts. Having noted that feature, the report proceeds to theorize on the inefficient use of time and overlooks what appears to be the most important fact: little use of books in schools serving low-income populations. From that angle, rather than seeking to measure instruction times and render them more efficient, as the report proposes,[49] the main concern should focus on the part played by written culture in today's schools. **In my view, that is the most notable conclusion to be drawn from the report.**

2. The report adopts a somewhat simplistic approach when it affirms that information systems for improving management—especially the Provincial Educational Systems Administrative Reform Program (PREGASE) of the National Program for Secondary School Decentralization and Improvement (PRODYMES)—have failed to make the educational system more efficient. Clearly, there is no relation between the availability of information and, for instance, the possibilities of concentrating teachers in educational establishments, given that the main problem is hiring, not the availability of information. Furthermore, this simplification lumps several different issues together: absenteeism, extensive leave, and excessive flexibility in the way it is granted, and strikes. On this, the report adopts the conventional view found in

[48] Generalization of composition can be seen in the new rules governing flexible school hours, in the reconstruction of knowledge, in the formulation of plans to be developed on the basis of basic structures or ideas (the notion of curriculum as a process), or in the disappearance of ordered series of purposes [*objetos*]. Thus, each school is constituted as a medium of governance, specification, and administration, while the teachers are envisaged as composers of a flexible sequence of times and activities.

[49] It may be interesting to take a look at another study by the woman who wrote the report, in which she expounds her conceptual framework at greater length. See Abadzi et al., "Monitoring Basic Skills through Rapid Learning Assessments: A Case Study from Peru," on the World Bank website.

international organizations and much of the literature on reforms in Latin America, to the effect that teachers and middle-level bureaucrats stymie reforms because they pose a threat to their collective interests. **Nevertheless, pointing out the disadvantages associated with rotating teachers and with absenteeism reinforces the idea that the system of hiring based on hours taught needs to be restructured.**

3. The evaluation report points out that the loans focused mainly on infrastructure and on equipment and neglected classroom work. On this topic, and on decentralization, which we discuss below, the report appears to adopt a different approach to that taken when the projects were devised. Indeed, the budgets clearly emphasize those two factors. There are, moreover, further elements that explain that emphasis, which the report does not adequately address. For monitoring and management control purposes, there is greater consensus (and there are better technical tools) regarding parameters for overseeing works and delivery of equipment than for measuring quality. This makes it easier to keep track of those works and minimize diversion. These are also less controversial issues, which makes it easier for the parties to reach agreements. Here it is important to point out an aspect that, understandably, is not highlighted in the evaluation report under review, namely that the "borrower" referred to in the report is a complex actor composed of central and provincial authorities that do not behave like a monolithic bloc and may indeed have tense, if not conflictive, relations among themselves. These actors may, in turn, be influenced by strategic considerations vis-à-vis the Bank and the principles and criteria it upholds. In that sense, infrastructure and equipment appear to be less controversial areas, which lend themselves more easily to agreements. Finally, we should not lose sight of the political impact of works and equipment for schools. In short, the bias pointed out by the report is not due to any mistake or negligence. Rather, it derives from an initial decision reinforced by the logic of negotiations and conflict between Bank representatives and national and provincial authorities, by political forces, and by the monitoring and management tools available. It is reasonable, after a decade of reforms and the experience accumulated over three loans, that certain aspects of the paradigm or original approach should be overhauled. However, it is also important to remember that after the loan has been approved politics continue to impinge on the economy of decisions and that it is necessary to interact with that rationale.

4. Likewise, the report also casts aspersions on decentralization, as in the following paragraph: "The national evaluation data were analyzed to gauge the impact of decentralization on the performance of public school pupils. The findings indicate that, generally speaking, decentralization improved those pupils' grades in tests. However, the impact appears to have been negative in schools in poor areas or in poorly managed provinces. Another Bank study suggests that autonomy and parental involvement improve student grades, but that this is not the case when there are low levels of participation. The IEP results appear to show the dangers of decentralization when management is deficient. While teachers enjoy considerable autonomy with respect to teaching what they consider appropriate, the schools have little say regarding financial resources and staff. In short, study programs have been decentralized as far as possible, but the system is barely able to supervise their

implementation." It is important to realize that [this] finding would have been unthinkable when the projects were designed. A change of paradigm has come about that the report does not reflect. The IEP and innovative projects were precisely intended to address that perspective, which the evaluation report appears to question.

Here the report appears to be somewhat tautological: the data sources are the Bank's own documents, interviews with officials and teachers, and visits to schools. A review of the discussions of ten years ago on some of the principles on which the projects were based would show that some of the problems detected by the report today may have been anticipated when they were formulated.

5. It is important not to omit the report's observation on the differentiating impact of an injection of funds on school establishments. It insinuates, on one hand, the existence of enrolment reorientation and selection processes toward and by the beneficiary establishments and, on the other, the boosting of the resources available to the schools when the equipment requires maintenance funding that is not provided on a regular basis by the provincial authorities

6. Finally, it is worth querying what part the crisis played in the performance and outcomes of the projects analyzed. The report states, "It was decided to investigate these projects in order to evaluate the difficulties involved in attempting to improve direct effects on learning in a middle-income country during a financial crisis." However, the actual dates on which the projects were signed and entered into force show that, with the exception of PRODYMES III, they pre-date the 1997 crisis. PRODYMES I was signed and entered into force in 1995; PRODYMES II in 1996 and 1997, respectively; and PRODYMES III in 1998. As for management of the projects, it cannot be inferred from the report that reformulations and disbursement delays explain the shortcomings it points to.

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