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Educational innovations in action

THE URUGUAYAN
EDUCATIONAL REFORM:
DOGMA OR A
POSSIBLE ROAD FORWARD?

Ana Verocai Masena and
Jorge Marroig Salaverría



INTERNATIONAL
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Introduction

This study attempts to approach the transformation that has taken place in Uruguayan compulsory basic secondary education, along with its successes, the conflicts it has had to face and the challenges still pending, from the standpoint of educational agents not involved in the reform's decision-making process.

The educational reform implemented in Uruguay was based on two core pivots: quality and educational equity (ANEP, 1997). Its main justification is rational and analytical based on the Economic Commission for Latin America studies (ECLA, 1992), and using a systemic, holistic approach. It was set in motion in 1996, and became the main topic of educational debate due to the wide scope of the issues addressed and the controversies aroused. The fact is that, in the initial diagnosis, opinion on the decline of the education system was unanimous. However, as the reform project advanced, disagreements began to appear, mainly among teachers. They reacted against the change in their labour rights in relation to working in subject areas. This reaction had a strong influence on the reform as a whole. Currently, it is going through a process of review and analysis, since a need is perceived to continue introducing changes if the proposed objectives are to be achieved.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXT

Uruguay is a small country, with an area of only 176,000 km², located between two large countries: Argentina and Brazil. It has a population of 3,300,000, mainly descendants of Europeans who arrived principally in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries seeking a better life.

Population growth is very low, 0.58%. Only 7% of the total population live in the countryside while 45% live in the capital, Montevideo.

It has a democratic republican political system, with a President and proportional representation, which experienced two interruptions to democracy during the twentieth century. It has a central administration and nineteen departmental governments with municipal functions.

The country's main wealth used to be livestock rearing, which made significant contributions to the economy until the mid-1950s, but since then and up to the present its relative share of GNP has been declining, due fundamentally to a steady fall in commodity prices. The country has still not found a substitute source of income. Since 1999, it has been going through the worst crisis in its history, with the closing of its two main markets, the appearance of foot-and-mouth disease and the breakdown of its financial system. In 2002, per capital GNP stood at US\$3,600, although it had been declining progressively over the previous four years. However, it shows

progressive social indicators: 0.41 on the Gini index, with a comparatively good income distribution; 6% poverty index: the country lies in thirty-seventh place on the UNDP human development scale, which places it within the group of countries with the best standard of living in the world, and it also has the highest relative public spending on the social sector among the Latin American countries. Even so, the age of people affected by poverty has dropped and 50% of children are now from needy homes. They are normally from extended or single-parent families, have little cultural capital, with limited codes and scant social assets, which seriously compromises the child's academic success and the peaceful development of Uruguayan society in the immediate future (Katzman, in UNDP, 1999).

Uruguay has a long educational history, beginning with José Pedro Varela's 1875 reform and its democratizing principles based on lay, compulsory, free education. Professional primary teacher training also began to be developed and in 1895 the Teacher Training Institute was set up, enabling all primary teachers to obtain a certificate. Uruguay has forged a solid national identity, a common language, democratic values and strong social cohesion. Secondary education was initially dependent on the university, which meant its rationale corresponded to preparation for higher studies and lacked a meaning and dynamics of its own. On the other hand, it saw its enrolment rise to similar levels to those in countries with greater economic and social development (Mancebo, 2001). This education, originally elitist in nature, went through a strong expansion process after the restoration of democracy in 1985. For the first time, students from low socio-cultural classes obtained mass entry to education. This shaped a scenario of internal failures that led to fundamental conflicts and determined the need to rethink this level of education, to give it a rationale of its own, making it meaningful for current participants and for society as a whole. This new symbolic representation requires varied, creative strategies to bring it into being, since the concept that 'education should be equal for all to guarantee equity' has been discredited and replaced by 'education should deal with diversity to achieve equity in completion of secondary school'. Due to primary education over a century and a quarter of educational life?

SPECIFIC PROBLEMS EXAMINED

The great transformations in society and culture, particularly in young people's culture, along with the advance of science and technology, the advent of instability and uncertainty, have blurred and dulled the principles of equity and quality so deeply rooted in our society. Many years of successful education, such as, for instance, full primary school enrolment with 95% completing this stage in 1990 (ANEP, 1996) and an extremely low illiteracy rate—3.2%—have concealed the inequalities and the decline in the quality of learning over recent years.

In the 1990s research was started on the actual learning of young people, which

revealed high drop-out rates and repeated years, as well as low levels of learning and inequity. As has already been mentioned, the secondary education system was not prepared for mass enrolment. The lack of research and analysis of the situation, as well as the scant ability to reflect on educational practice and the new scenarios, led to teachers' activities becoming mere routine and to educational stagnation (CEPAL, 1990). What education provides does not meet young people's and their families' expectations (Área de Planeamiento Educativo, 1998). There is a need for a reform in the country's education that will embrace the diverse problems and their causes, and be appropriate to the situation and the context.

The Uruguayan education system

Three independent bodies with clearly differentiated spheres of competence govern education in Uruguay: the **Ministry of Education and Culture**, the **University of the Republic of Uruguay** and the **National Administration of Public Education**. The activities of these three bodies complement each other through the **Education Co-ordinating Body**, consisting by law of their three heads and representatives of private education.

The **National Administration of Public Education** (Administración Nacional de Educación Pública—ANEP) was set up by Emergency Law 15.739 in early 1985. Its superior body is the **Central Administrative Council** (Consejo Directivo Central—CODICEN) whose members are the National Director of Public Education, who presides over the Council, the Vice-President and three Counsellors. Its main purposes are to: establish the country's education policy; provide completely free compulsory general primary education, post-basic studies, general secondary education, technical education and teacher training; and to supervise all private schools.

ANEP has the support of three autonomous decentralized councils, responsible for administering each sub-system, and a Teacher-Training and Extension Course Department.

The **Primary Education Council** (Consejo de Educación Primaria—CEP) is responsible for pre-school education, for children aged 4 and 5, and primary education, including the six years of compulsory schooling.

The **Secondary Education Council** (Consejo de Educación Secundaria—CES) is responsible for compulsory basic secondary education, covering the 1st to 3rd years, and upper secondary education, covering the 1st, 2nd and 3rd years of the secondary school certificate course, the last two providing different options in line with university studies.

As well as the CES, the **Professional Technical Education Council** (Consejo de Educación Técnico Profesional—CETP) provides compulsory basic education, with the same curriculum and is also responsible for secondary technological education, basic vocational education and advanced vocational education, which prepare young people not only to continue with higher studies, but also to enter the workforce.

The **Teacher-Training and Extension Course Department** is in charge of the primary teacher-training institutes that prepare teachers for both infant education (pre-school) and primary education. It is also responsible for the Artigas Teachers' Institute in the city of Montevideo, set up in 1949, which was the only secondary teacher-training school until 1997, when regional secondary teachers' centres (centros regionales de profesores—CERP) were set up in different parts of the country. These report to a new institution set up within the framework of the reform, the **Secretariat for Teacher Training and Extension Courses**.

On the other hand, in 1985 the **Teacher Technical Assemblies** (Asambleas Técnico Docentes—ATD) were set up by law, one for each branch of education, with an advisory role in relation to primary, secondary and professional technical education and the Teacher-Training and Extension Course Department. The ATD authorities are chosen by teachers in secret ballots with departmental national representation and consist of what is called a Permanent Committee, with five members and the General Assembly, with delegates from all over the country. The Permanent Committee meets weekly and its objectives are to:

- a) consult teachers on technical and teaching issues, subjects on which all teachers in the country meet at least twice a year, in their schools, on a paid basis;
- b) draw up the relevant report with an analysis of each centre's proposals;
- c) be teachers' representatives on the respective councils; and
- d) organize the week-long annual General Assembly, with representatives from all over the country, where the issues are debated and future lines of action defined.

The Teacher Technical Assemblies are financed by the State and delegates work regularly on committees that debate how the education system is functioning.

SECONDARY EDUCATION: 150 YEARS OF HISTORY

Secondary education has existed in Uruguay as preparation for university studies, under the aegis of the University of the Republic since 1849 (ANEP, 2000e) and in 1912 it expanded with the setting up of departmental secondary schools. In smaller cities, on the initiative and with funding from the local community, the so-called people's secondary schools were set up under the aegis of the State.

In 1973, Education Law 14101 was passed establishing that education would be 'compulsory, common and general' and would last nine years, covering the six years of primary education and the first three of secondary education, in line with the most widespread international practice.

Since the return to democracy there has been an expansion in secondary education, which has achieved a gross enrolment rate of 84%, there being a political will to expand and universalize this level. To this end, new secondary schools are being set up in different parts of the country and strategies to facilitate student attendance are being sought (ANEP, 1998).

Regarding the curricular structure, basic education has been through three successive plans: 1976, 1986 and 1996. The latter arose from an exhaustive diagnosis of the period 1985–90 by the ECLA Office at the request of the CODICEN, which was concerned about the country's education system and asked for a diagnosis of each sub-system. This clearly showed a new social situation, which led to a review of students' learning in basic education, at that time called the 'Single Basic Education Stage'. The study, which lasted five years, provided the basis for defining educational policy in the 1995–2000 period.

Reform: utopia or reality?

PRELUDE

In the 1990s, different world and regional studies and trials showed the importance of introducing changes in ways of teaching and in the knowledge to be taught. Economically speaking, there are currently three broad categories of jobs or activities: (a) those corresponding to routine, Ford-type services; (b) those connected with personal or routine services, but provided 'face to face'; and (c) those providing symbolic services. Presumably, the more symbolic workers a country has, the higher its productivity, the stronger its values of justice and democracy and the better its re-distribution of wealth. It is therefore indispensable to develop certain abilities, to provide young people with the minimum necessary tools to avoid exclusion. These abilities, according to Tedesco (1997) are: (a) the ability to make abstractions; (b) the ability to think systemically; (c) the ability to experiment; and (d) the ability for teamwork. The teacher must therefore teach differently and make the desire to learn the driving force of cognitive behaviour so that each individual can learn throughout his or her life (Delors, 1996).

AN URGENT NEED FOR CHANGE

Despite many achievements, particularly with regard to coverage, the ECLA reports (1990, 1992, 1994) reveal the **low quality of learning**, the **inequity in access to knowledge** in the different social sectors, **teacher de-professionalization** and the need for a **change in the administration** of educational establishments, in step with the new modes of organization. The factors that define the urgent need for reform in basic secondary education are:

1. High rates of repeating, dropping out and falling behind, which means a high level of school failure.
2. Very low results in standardized tests in mathematics and Spanish language in both stages of secondary education.
3. Inequity in the distribution of significant knowledge manifested in greater learning among more educable pupils, since they come from homes with a high cultural capital.
4. A high number of teachers lacking specific teaching studies.

These arguments were presented to the academic communities and submitted to the Parliament of the Republic. A consensus in society and recognition of the need for change in education were achieved. In its favour it has:

- A reliable, thorough diagnosis by an international body from outside the education system;

- Political will with initial support from all political parties;
- External credit for investment and implementation.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ACTION

With the aim of developing competencies and stimulating abilities for the individual and collective growth of young people, a new school design is proposed based on a participative mode of administration, with the following characteristics:

- The schools should be on a human scale, between 500 and 1,000 students, in two separate morning or afternoon sessions,* preferably with different educational levels in different sessions.
- Each session should allow five-and-a-half hours of class time per day, from Monday to Saturday.
- A curriculum should be developed with subject-based areas to avoid fragmentation of knowledge.
- Each session should have a small number of teachers and auxiliary teaching staff, thus encouraging commitment to the school and to the educational activities since teachers and pupils can get to know each other better.
- Overall responsibility for the school should lie with an administrative staff trained to develop an educational project that both meets the general conditions and also has its own particular characteristics in line with the student profile and the community it belongs to.
- The daily length of classes and their weekly frequency should ensure that all students have a reasonable time for successful teaching/learning either in morning or afternoon sessions.
- There should be periods for open curriculum activities that reflect the interests of students and teachers.

To achieve this new school model a structural reform was encouraged, whose basic objectives were to:

- Promote educational equity;
- Improve the quality of education;
- Give greater esteem to teacher training and the teaching function;
- Strengthen institutional administration.

The conception is global and systemic, covering several dimensions and imprinting a general philosophy on the whole system; the different sub-systems are consistently integrated, with dynamic, flexible links providing unity.

We will analyse the main pivots of the reform in relation to basic secondary education and the educational levels directly associated with it.

* Translator's note: Uruguayan schools function with separate groups of students in morning and afternoon sessions, thus doubling the number of pupils in any one establishment.

The strategies for modifying the situation were established in what was called a **Pilot Experience** or the **Basic Education Pilot Plan, 1996**, which involved profound curricular, structural and curriculum changes. To implement and follow them up, a Secondary Education and Teacher-Training Improvement Programme (Mejoramiento de Enseñanza Secundaria y Formación Docente—MESyFOD) was set up, which carried out follow-up studies and evaluations and disseminated the results. It has now become the Middle School and Teacher-Training Modernization Programme (MEMFOD).

Implementation of this reform began in March 1996, as a pilot experience in eight secondary and three technical schools, subsequently extended to a total of 350 schools throughout the country. Teaching and institutional teams were trained for the purpose, with specific training courses in the different areas and in administration.

In 1999, more secondary and technical schools have gradually been incorporated covering 50% of students enrolled in the first year of secondary education and all pupils in the first year of technical education, including those in alternating agricultural schools throughout the country.

THE MAIN DIRECTIONS

Structural changes

The most significant structural changes focused on the conversion of macro schools, with a high number of pupils, ranging between 1,000 and 3,000, into schools for between 500 and 1,000 pupils. It was also sought to differentiate them by educational level according to age group, separating basic education from the secondary school certificate level. There was a great investment effort in building infrastructure, constructing new classrooms, educational premises and refurbishing existing ones. These smaller schools make it possible:

- for students and parents to get to know each other, and for teachers to have more personal contact with them;
- to improve interpersonal relations and bonds;
- to develop a greater feeling of belonging and commitment to the institution;
- to focus on the specific issues of each academic level.

Learning time and socialization

From the curricular point of view, learning and socialization time have been extended in schools, since on the one hand the number of hours has increased from thirty-two to thirty-nine a week, which means a 22% increase in teaching time. On the other hand, pupils' time in the school has increased from three-and-a-half hours to five-and-a-half hours, which has meant an increase of 57% in socialization time. These changes have in themselves significantly modified the way the schools function, since there are now two instead of three separate sessions per school.

New subjects

New subjects were incorporated into the curriculum, as follows:

- Informatics;
- English (with more hours);
- Adolescent project;
- Technological project.

The new curriculum proposed these subjects to support changes in social performance as citizens and workers in the twenty-first century and to provide young people with the necessary tools. **Informatics** and **English** were incorporated into the instrumental area, the latter as a second language and the only foreign language with an increase in class hours. Both of these subjects have a curriculum load of five hours per week, corresponding to one hour a day. It was understood that this frequency would facilitate learning of these codes and would qualify students to establish inter-relationships and gain entry to the world of the future. In the 1986 Plan, English had only three hours a week and there was a choice between this language or French. In the previous plan, there was no informatics subject, and its inclusion was intended to bring young people into contact with the computer and to learn how it works.

In basic secondary education (ciclo básico de los liceos—CES), two free curricular periods a week were set up, called **Adolescent Project Periods**, aimed at dealing with and satisfying the needs of young people. The objective was for the pupils to develop creativity, autonomy, organizational ability and self-management of the periods as well as to provide them with a place where they feel in charge, where they can learn to debate, support, negotiate and make decisions. These are the only periods where the pupil does not receive a numerical assessment and they are managed by the secondary school's administrative team. Different professionals, not necessarily teachers, submit projects to the secondary school administrative staff that should reflect the interests of the pupils and teaching teams and be in line with the school's plan.

On the other hand, in the technical schools' basic stage (ciclo básico de las escuelas técnicas—CETP) the only curricular difference from secondary schools is the absence of Sound and Music Education and of the Adolescent Project Periods, these being replaced by the **Technological Project Periods**. A workshop-laboratory called **'The Galileo Classroom'** was created for this purpose, where young people carry out practical projects in small groups through co-operative work. In this case, the classes are the simultaneous responsibility of three teachers from the technological area, so the lessons can be carried out in workshops, with a weekly curricular allocation of four periods. This subject seeks to develop practical, social, ethical and aesthetic competencies that will prepare young people for life.

Curriculum areas

Another aspect of the 1996 reform is the new **mixed curricular design by areas** of knowledge and subjects (MESyFOD, 1997), dealing with the psycho-educational

Drawing	2	2	Visual and plastic sciences	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	Physical ed. & recreation	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	4	4
Music	1	1	Sound & musical ed,	2	2	2	2					
			Adolescent project	2	2	2						
Sub-total Expression	5	5	3	9	9	9	9	4	4	4	6	6
			Notebook family activities								8	8
			Specialization studies								5	5
			Evening activities								5	5
			Study visits								6	6
Sub-total Alternating	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	24
Introduction to technology	3	3	3	Technology project				4	4	4	3	3
				Agricultural workshop							9	9
Sub-total Technology	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	4	4	4	12	12
TOTAL	32	32	32	39	39	39	39	38	38	38	80	80

Source: ANEP, 1996c.

basis of the curriculum, which follows the rationale of the needs of the student aged 12 to 15 and not just the rationale of the discipline (ECLA, 1994). These areas are:

- **Instrumental area**, covering the subjects: Mathematics, Spanish Language/Literature, English and Informatics;
- **Social Sciences**, with the subjects: Understanding Today's World in the first year, Understanding America in the second year and History of Contemporary Uruguay, Geography of the Mercosur countries and Citizenship Training in the third year;
- **Natural Sciences**, with the subjects Understanding Nature in the first year, Understanding Man in the second year and Biology and Physical and Chemical Sciences in the third year;
- **Expression**, with the subjects Visual and Plastic Education, Sound and Musical Education, Physical Education and Adolescent or Technological Project Periods. See Table 1.

It should be stressed that on reaching the third year, the areas begin to be divided to facilitate transfer to upper secondary education:

- Social Sciences into History, Geography and Citizenship Education.
- Natural Sciences into Biological Sciences and Physical and Chemical Sciences.

The purpose of this curriculum organization by subjects was first of all to reduce the abrupt change between primary and secondary education by smoothing the clash of cultures on changing from a single teacher at primary school to a large number of teachers in secondary school (Hargreaves & Earl, 1998).

On the other hand, knowledge is currently of such magnitude that it has meant great development of different disciplines, as reflected in the traditional curriculum. These disciplines attempt to explain 'knowledge' exclusively from their own specialized point of view, leading to a fragmentation of knowledge and consequently distancing the students from its meaning. The integrated approach to knowledge by a single teacher enables the pupil gradually to understand reality as it is. This approach to the object of knowledge as a whole, based on young people's interests and their prior knowledge, and using incremental development, facilitates the construction of learning and makes conversion to appropriate teaching possible (Chevallard, 1998).

Teaching in a single school

In line with this measure of teaching by subject areas, a timetable structure was introduced that permits daily contact between pupils and teachers, as well as contact with the area of knowledge, in order to provide learning continuity. These lines of action also include the concentration of teachers' contact hours in a single school, on the understanding that this allows development of a greater sense of belonging, the establishment of stronger bonds between colleagues and with pupils, as well as greater knowledge of them. It also gets rid of the 'taxi' teacher, since in the traditional structure, to have a reasonable timetable load, he/she had to travel between several establishments during the same week and even during the same day. In this new design,

each area teacher is in charge of five groups at the same level, with five hours a week per group, working twenty-five contact hours in the same morning or afternoon session. Each teacher also has five paid hours per week for co-ordination and tasks relating to their teaching function. Each teacher thus receives a salary for a thirty-hour week's 'package', concentrating his/her work in a single school.

TABLE 2. Secondary education teachers according to level of training

	Total	
	Number	%
Secondary teacher training, complete	4044	31
Secondary teacher training, incomplete	2234	17
Primary teacher training, complete	1524	12
Primary teacher training, incomplete	255	2
INET, ISEF, complete	654	5
INET, ISEF, incomplete	84	1
University, complete	1222	9
University, incomplete	1710	13
Others	1506	11
Total	13233	100

Source: ANEP, 1996b.

Teacher training

With regard to **teacher training**, it is important to stress that the level is very heterogeneous for secondary education teachers, as can be seen in Table 2. According to the teacher census of 1995, 31% are graduates of the Teachers' Institute, 25.6% have completed tertiary studies, 32.3% have started but not completed tertiary studies and 11% have no higher studies. This situation compromises the level of teaching. In response, it was sought to expand supply by changing from the single Artigas Teachers' Institute (Instituto de Profesores Artigas—I.P.A.) in Montevideo to six regional teachers' centres (centros regionales de profesores—CERP) located in different places so that students throughout the country could follow studies as teachers of basic secondary education. A system of scholarships was implemented, covering accommodation, transport and meals, which allowed access to teacher training to young people who for economic reasons could not continue their studies. The curricular proposal was also reformed by structuring knowledge by areas and incorporating English and Informatics as basic communication tools. The study day was also extended from four to eight hours, which meant the study plan could be completed in three years instead of four (Vaillant & de Moura Castro, 1999).

Another action that reinforces teacher upgrading was recognition of qualifications by a pay incentive of 7.5% of salaries.

Along with this strategy for teacher professionalization, training courses were held during holiday periods for all teachers in charge of groups in schools: Pilot experience and support groups for the 1996 Plan were set up to undertake tutorials and monitor the groups. Curriculum guides were also drawn up in support of the teaching work and to act as a model for planning classes and for incorporating innovative classroom strategies. These guides bring together the most successful experiences of teachers who have started to implement the new curriculum, as well as providing a solid theoretical framework for practice.

Co-ordination

Co-ordination is considered key to this innovation and was requested for years by teachers through their ATDs, since the teacher's activity had been perceived as separate and solitary, with few possibilities for exchanging experiences, which leads to them becoming isolated and to stagnation of the teaching profession. In traditional teaching, each teacher plans and implements the curriculum alone, giving priority to factual and conceptual contents and working with specific knowledge, without linking and integrating them with other disciplines. Co-ordination fosters integration of knowledge by avoiding fragmentation. As Gimeno Sacristán and Pérez Gómez state (1993):

It means adopting a position of resistance and searching for an alternative to a dominant practice in modern culture and society. Such a purpose is not easy, since integration of knowledge does not have available the time or means or people or the support of interests vested in specialization.

Basic education's new curricular design by subjects, with times especially set aside for co-ordination, with paid teaching hours for this purpose, is an alternative that responds to the challenges of today's education. Collective practice by qualified individuals based on their own disciplines and open to dialogue, working in a team, reading texts that will qualify them further, generates new possibilities for learning and teaching.

Co-ordination Time is particularly rich and valuable for the professional development of teachers in a school and for the growth of the institution. It is therefore considered essential for it to be encouraged and used efficiently and productively in search of greater teacher professionalization.

'The quality of teaching can only be improved by increasing the teachers' ability to understand their educational values through practice. The only way to improve will be through research that makes it possible to construct practice systematically and rationally' (Carr, 1993). It is therefore considered of vital importance to work on this period of reflection on practices, exchanges and agreements in order to achieve quality learning. As Co-ordination Time is a time for collective construction, it enables each institution to grow in line with its own timing, potential and actual resources.

There are numerous issues that can be addressed in such a broad area, but there are also some aspects that cannot be absent. These are as follows:

- organization of the school year;
- construction of the school plan that will be the core guiding the whole educational community's activities, including implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- institutional self-evaluation;
- teacher training to improve practice and optimize academic results;
- reflection on educational practices and how to improve them;
- the search for agreements and consensus.

Other topics that should be addressed in co-ordinations are:

- communication of information;
- common implementation of work carried out in each level or course;
- submission of proposals;
- planning of activities to develop transversal learning axes;
- discussion of problems common to all levels;
- the detailed study of teaching issues such as: evaluation, teaching, methodology, learning theories;
- analysis of tables with information on pupils and groups relating to academic and socio-cultural-family aspects;
- study of both individual pupil and group behaviour problems;
- treatment of specific issues relating to pupils' needs;
- dialogue with pupils' parents to discuss each pupil's performance and attitudes;
- inter-disciplinary co-ordination;
- co-ordination by areas.

In this participative administration mode, which materializes through the co-ordination meetings, all disciplines stimulate each other even though the approach is by areas. All teachers work with common objectives and handle the same codes. They all contribute so that young people can do research, question and express opinions. As can be deduced from this proposition, the way this area is developed depends essentially on the academic community and specifically on the administrative team. Hence, there is a need to recognize the importance of strengthening the administration of secondary schools, making them more professional so that they can act with true leadership in teaching.

Educational projects

Another aspect that was innovative as a strategy in this reform is **promotion and support for the drawing up of institutional projects or plans** as a way of contextualizing the problems to be resolved, thus providing a certain degree of autonomy to schools. Schools were encouraged to submit educational projects focused on reducing school failure and teachers received parallel training. They were tutored by technical specialists, both in the development and in the implementation and evaluation

processes. Prior to the latter two stages, an evaluation panel authorizes funding or otherwise, depending on quality, relevance, internal consistency and viability.

Strengthening institutional administration

Another key point, as has already been mentioned and is made explicit in the objectives of this reform, is **strengthening institutional administration** as a means of bringing about real changes in secondary education. This new approach requires a different kind of administration, given the greater autonomy granted to schools. The need is seen for administrative teams trained for the task, in order to improve internal efficiency so its main attributes will be quality and equity.

The headteacher plays a vital role in the change processes, both in setting up the school team and in developing the project and running the co-ordination meetings. His or her main characteristics, according to Vandenberghe (1989), should be:

- to have a clear, well-developed view of what he/she wants the school to be;
- to articulate goals and expectations quickly and clearly;
- the ability to translate and communicate that view into goals for the school and into expectations of teachers, students and administrative staff;
- the ability to create a supportive atmosphere for achieving goals and expectations;
- to create opportunities for training the teaching team within the institution and to facilitate their training outside it;
- to support teachers, to become familiar with their profile and professional ability;
- to value his/her people, look for the positive side in each one and encourage them with recognition;
- to bear in mind the following key words: consistency, participation, communication and negotiation.

To this end, in 1998 headteachers were trained by Plan '96 in the new administrative method. There were also open competitive exams with four eliminatory tests, in which theoretical knowledge and practical competencies for undertaking the post were evaluated. A Register of Permanent Headteachers was then set up, which strengthens the image of the school head in the education community.

Regional inspectorates

New regional basic education inspectorates were set up to decentralize decision-making and administration, as well as bringing teaching support to schools away from the capital. These regional inspectorates are common to secondary education and technical professional education. They have the following *specific objectives* (ANEP, 1999b):

- To promote decentralization;
- To preserve the necessary consistency between actions at the institutional and/or regional level and the general educational policy objectives;
- To strengthen the development of local education communities;

- To co-ordinate teaching activities for training and education;
- To create regional inter-institutional exchange networks;
- To improve institutional and regional management.

For this purpose, a public invitation was issued to interested teachers with a certain type of profile and they were trained in specific courses for the function. A characteristic of these inspections is the setting up of a team in each region including a co-ordinating inspector in administration and a language inspector, one for the natural sciences and another for the social sciences.

Foreign-language schools

The foreign-language schools programme was initiated by the creation of eleven schools in different parts of the country, which operate in separate premises from secondary education institutions, but are intended for all basic education students who wish to learn languages. This proposal, completely free of charge, arose as a complement to the incorporation of English as the only compulsory foreign language in the basic education curriculum. In these schools regular three-year courses with achievement tests are provided in Portuguese, French, Italian and German.

Investment in books

To support these lines of action and ensure their success, there was heavy investment in books. Thus one text per pupil was given out in each of the areas so that each pupil could have the necessary materials available. On the other hand, reference books were purchased to enrich the teaching libraries. In both cases, the purpose was to improve learning.

Rural areas

In rural areas, given the lack of teachers, the weak educational infrastructure and the limited equipment, it is very difficult to maintain a single educational method. Several strategies have been implemented to provide a solution:

- To make **buses** available to transport pupils to the nearest town or to a rural secondary school, this alternative being useful in highly populated areas.
- **Setting up of the seventh, eighth and ninth years** in some schools with over fifty pupils. These courses are provided by specialist teachers and are equivalent to basic education.
- Development of **alternating basic education**, which has one curricular component in common with the urban schools and another one linked to the area where the pupil lives. A feature of this course is that pupils board one week in the agricultural school and the next stay at home with their families.

As has already been mentioned, these **new educational methods** were incorporated into the system, which is strongly centralized and advocates hegemonic education. This is based on the conception that the same education must be given to all to ensure

educational equity. However, by attempting to address young people’s different needs, a range of methods is introduced, as can be seen in Table 3, partly modifying the system’s unitary conception, since the curriculum is very similar. Using a new approach, these different methods seek to offset the inequalities at entry by providing different options in order to guarantee equity on leaving.

TABLE 3. Types of basic education

Before 1995		After 1996	
1	Basic education single plan, 1986	1	Basic Education Plan '96
1.1	Urban secondary school	2	Technological basic education
1.2	Rural secondary school	3	Alternating technological basic education
2	Agricultural basic education—boarding	4	Integrated education science
	Permanent	5	7 th , 8 th , 9 th
3	Basic education evening	6	Basic Education Plan '86
		6.1	Urban secondary schools
		6.2	Rural secondary schools
		7	Basic secondary evening

Source: ANEP, 1999b.

Evaluation and impact

ANALYSIS OF THE LINES OF ACTION

Given the breadth and scope of the basic education reform, which substantially modified the education system, it is very difficult to make an exhaustive evaluation, item by item, of each of the strategies implemented.

The increase in learning and socialization time was designed to improve conditions for young people who have no support at home, since in most cases this is the first generation with access to this level of education, so they do not receive the necessary support from their parents to follow the courses and remain in the system. It is thus understood that the extended school day not only improves the quality of learning but also reduces socio-cultural gaps in the search for equity.

With regard to the incorporation of new subjects into the curriculum, the impact has been varied and has encountered different obstacles to implementation.

Informatics has been well received by students, their families and teachers, but there is no objective evaluation of its impact. An enormous effort has been made, since for each five groups at the same level, an informatics laboratory with sixteen terminals has been set up, so two pupils can work at each keyboard. Nevertheless, it is still necessary to pursue this effort, since groups continue to be incorporated into the reform and only 26.2% of classrooms have access to the Internet (ANEP-MEM-FOD, 2001). The initial objectives of teaching informatics included turning it into an integrated learning tool by incorporating it into the educational processes of other subjects. Although currently a knowledge building process is in progress, not only for the pupils but for the system as a whole, this goal is more difficult to achieve. On the one hand, the required computers are not yet installed and, on the other, there are not enough trained teachers, since the number of groups has increased from 55 to 1550, requiring a total of 500 new teachers. Furthermore, few subject teachers have sufficient knowledge of informatics to use computers as working tools. Despite this, teacher-training institutes do not provide an informatics teacher option, but it has been included in the curriculum of the other teacher-training courses as a subject, so future teachers will undergo it as part of their training.

The incorporation of English into the curriculum faces the same difficulties. The increase in hours and its expansion to all courses in basic education meant an unsatisfied demand for trained human resources. In order to reverse this situation teachers are still being trained and there has been an increase in enrolment for the English teacher-training course. It should be pointed out that this measure also meets with parents' approval, particularly that of the lower socio-economic sectors, since it grants them access to knowledge that would otherwise be very expensive to obtain. An objec-

tive evaluation of students' achievements has not been carried out in this case either, since it was only at the end of 2002 that a first test was given to a sample group.

Generically, it can be said that young people are familiar with a second language and with informatics as a tool, which enables them to handle new codes by acquiring communication competencies that put them in a position to benefit from an increasingly integrated world.

In many very different ways and, given its participative nature, students also appreciate the Adolescent Project Periods. How successful this is and how much it is valued depends on the institution's and the teacher's ability for self-management. It is one of the few elements that allow a certain degree of decentralization. This kind of autonomy enjoyed by the school with regard to teaching, with the opportunity of choosing the teacher and deciding on the contents for this area, is unique, since all the rest of the curriculum, as well as teacher appointments, is prescribed centrally. This way of appointing teachers directly by the school administrations produced strong criticism from staff, some of whom alleged that they were losing jobs and that it gave rise to favouritism. However, the greatest obstacle encountered in the administration of this time has been finding human resources trained to carry out flexible, innovative proposals with a technical and educational basis. The meaning of this period is often distorted by turning it into just another 'class' or else it becomes a kind of lesson where 'anything goes'.

If it enjoyed appropriate self-management, educational proposals suitable for the socio-cultural context of each group of pupils could be provided. This is a point to be strengthened by external support to the school so it can become a real period **for young people**. In this sense, the MEMFOD programme is directed at implementing improvement strategies through 'student projects'.

The **Technological Project Periods** are one of the great attractions for students in the Technical Professional Education Council's basic education, since in the Galileo Classroom a workshop methodology is used based on projects. The teachers, usually from the technological area, have had to prepare themselves to work with projects, since their training is focused on technical skills.

This area is an 'expensive' element in the reform. It means a heavy investment and high operating costs. It is a great challenge for the education system, in that it is staked on an upper secondary education more closely linked to the labour market. Although it enables vocational exploration by stimulating pupils' technological concerns, it is limited to pupils in the Technical Professional Education Council's basic education course and to pupils in the seventh, eighth and ninth years, which account for only 15% of the total. It should be pointed out that objective evaluations have not been carried out here either.

Curricular design by areas sought to reduce the total number of subjects, but this was not possible, since it was understood to be essential to incorporate other areas

basic to education in the twenty-first century. This meant that students were still being taught by a high number of teachers. With reference to the integrated approach to knowledge, despite a great training effort, there are still topic approaches that are very much focused on the specific aspects of knowledge, without including a broader view. On the one hand, this strategy came up against the training for teachers by disciplines, whether teaching staff or inspectors, and on the other an inertia that is still reflected in the new programmes and in the training courses implemented, since they respond to that rationale.

Work by subject areas is still strongly questioned by teachers through the trade unions and the Technical Teaching Assemblies, who allege that each teacher's specific training is not respected and that some subjects reduce the number of hours per week. It can easily be verified that the total number of hours in each area is similar in both plans; what varies is the way they are grouped. It is also suggested that the academic level is lower, since there is a single teacher who lacks the appropriate training for teaching by areas. In this respect, it is considered necessary to improve teachers' training as well as to address initial training by areas.

The disciplines rationale, rooted in our academically oriented culture, is understood to be important in higher level courses, where disciplinary contents are given priority. However, in basic secondary education, it is considered essential for them to acquire competencies that qualify them to continue higher studies but also prepare them for their incorporation into society and work.

The new **timetable structure and concentration** of hours met with the support of teachers and initially there was effectively a greater concentration of hours. However, there has since been an increase in the hours teachers can work and currently there are teachers with sixty teaching periods a week. This has meant excessively heavy workloads, and the consequent movement of teachers changing schools. In addition, in order to solve the timetable problem, 'dividing the hour packages' has begun to occur, which means a gradual return to the situation prior to the reform. Therefore, the 'taxi' teacher continues to exist, preventing the development of a sense of belonging. On the other hand, for schools in small towns that lack a sufficient number of groups, it has not been possible to implement concentration of contact hours.

With regard to **teacher professionalization**, the setting up of the regional schools and the measures for reducing the private cost to students, as well as upgrading of the teaching career and the salary incentive for teachers with qualifications, has meant a constant growth in enrolment for future teachers, as can be seen in Table 4.

With regard to **teacher training**, although significant efforts have been made, since all the teachers who joined Plan '96 received specific training, changes in classroom practice have not been achieved. Teachers demand more studies that will enable them to refresh their practices by qualifying them to use new strategies. This shows that they value further training opportunities and what have been provided have probably been inadequate. On the other hand, the courses are dissociated from the teach-

ing career, since credits in line with the effort were not envisaged, so rather than being a motivation for teachers, they have been a burden to them and have therefore not been very stimulating.

TABLE 4. Number of students enrolled in teacher-training colleges per year.

	Total	Montevideo	Interior
1995	7306	3229	4077
1996	10492	5647	4845
1997	11019	5643	5376
1998	10625	5331	5294
1999	11833	6208	5625

Source: ANEP, 1999b.

The use of **curriculum guides** as support for the teacher has become the only agent outside the school that supports the teacher, either in the planning of curricular development or in the choice of the methodology for working with each topic in the classroom. Underestimating requirements for the supervision system has meant that many teachers in schools located far from the capital go for years without receiving a visit from a supervisor. Although the headteacher's leadership is important and is exercised basically in the co-ordination periods, given the complexity of the post, this work is insufficient to meet teachers' specific advisory requirements and needs for each area. The guides have been very much appreciated by teachers, since 45% of them use them at least once a week (ANEP-MEMFOD, 2001) for planning the topic units, 32%, and the activities, 20%.

Through the **Co-ordination Period** changes have been achieved in institutional and classroom management, moving from a conception of the teacher's work in isolation to a more collective view, since it enables processes of joint reflection on one's own practice by integrating knowledge. It is thus an area for **teacher professionalization** in the school itself. This has been rated as very positive by 60% of teachers and the opinion of the headteachers is even more clear (ANEP-MEMFOD, 2001).

Initially, it was intended to deal with co-ordination every day, devoting an hour to a meeting at the end of the session. From the experiences in the first schools with pilot projects, it was observed that at the end of each teaching day, the teaching team was not at its best for dealing with co-ordination and that one hour was not sufficient to focus on the topic and exchange ideas. In short, it did not meet the objectives for which it had been set up, but a weekly meeting to develop and implement the school's project was nevertheless seen to be indispensable. The institutional teams propose a three-hour weekly meeting with the whole teaching team and to devote the other two hours to inter- and intra-area co-ordination.

One of the difficulties encountered was to find a time that would allow the school's entire teaching and administrative team to attend. This is due to the large number of teaching hours required of teachers. Furthermore, the teacher's work was considered to take place exclusively in the classroom, so that co-ordination was not viewed as part of the workload. Another difficulty was the lack of a participative, open culture, since it is very difficult for the teacher to share ways of working and experiences, particularly when these have not been successful.

Currently there is great variation in administrative methods, with schools where learning has been really fostered through co-ordinated work and others where it has not been possible to achieve a mode of operation that will guarantee a process of analysis and incorporation of teaching practices that are then reflected in classroom activities and therefore in educational results.

This process of professionalization takes its time and for this reason MEMFOD is setting in motion a strategy to strengthen the Co-ordination Time, on the understanding that it is a cornerstone for improving students' learning. To the extent that this area is worked on appropriately, a higher academic level among teachers, and a deeper knowledge of the institution and its actors will be achieved and it will be possible to implement institutional projects focused on learning problems.

At the present time, there is only a very small area of the country where **institutional projects** have not been implemented. It can be said that most of the secondary schools have learned to work on educational projects, dealing with the specific problems of each educational community and in search of strategies that will enable them to overcome the difficulties. There is still a great deal to be done, particularly in the field of parents' participation relating to young people's learning.

The two actions that are considered a pillar for the success of the new plan, from the teachers' viewpoint, are the Co-ordination Times and the '*in and with*' project work, since they allow them to participate and give them a leading role, so that they feel they are also builders of the institution's purpose and the students' futures. The greatest challenge is to turn these areas into genuine germinators of innovative ideas that will improve the quality of learning and provide young people with equality of opportunity.

Strengthening of institutional administration. The head- and deputy headteacher structure is renewed by competitive examinations for administration posts. It should be pointed out that this strategy led to significant damage, since all headteachers had to resign their posts and compete to obtain them on a long-term basis, with a very low likelihood of being able to influence the outcome. Today, four years after the first headteacher competitions, the wounds have almost healed and the administrative teams are mostly working satisfactorily with a new administrative method based on participation, teamwork and implementing institutional projects drawn up in the educational community itself.

Although the system recognizes the importance of granting autonomy to the schools in the new administrative method, in fact it has not been possible to put this into prac-

tice due, on the one hand, to the lack of professionalization, as has already been mentioned, and on the other, the strong centralism inherent in the system.

The creation of the **regional inspectorates** was an attempt to bring inspectors closer to teachers and schools. Prior to the introduction of this strategy, it had been seen how teacher inspections had become too concerned over specifics—bureaucratic and anodyne. This was due to the lack of coverage of the positions available, as well as to the fact that the increase in secondary level enrolment had not been taken into account, which prevented inspectors from undertaking an advisory, supportive role to back up teachers’ work. At the beginning, the setting up of these new inspections generated expectations in teachers and in the centres, but this gradually declined as the vacancies failed to be filled. On the other hand, there has been an unexpected effect since some inspectors who were already working, usually based in Montevideo, perceived it as an invasion of their areas of competence.

In relation to the acquisition of books, in the 1995–2000 period, 3.7 books/pupil were distributed as loans to each pupil in basic secondary education (ANEP, 2000). This investment, which is very significant given the volume, has had an impact on society, bringing books to homes that had no access to them. Although it is not easy to achieve changes in reading habits, the mere presence of books in the most unprivileged homes makes for the development of a new family and social culture.

Despite formulating a major educational proposal for **rural areas**, approximately two thirds of rural primary school-leavers do not go on to secondary studies, defining a particular kind of exclusion originating in the lack of opportunity to gain access to secondary education.

Given the **structural changes** in the new organization of the curriculum and the extended timetable, a significant number of classrooms should have been built quickly, since their absence restricts expansion of the reform. As can be seen both in Table 5 and in Figure 1, a significant building investment was required. Despite the great effort, this has still not been perceived as a success at the school level, since the urgencies of the service itself lead to dissatisfaction among the educational communities at the lack of facilities. This is because organizational change has been carried out faster than building construction.

TABLE 5. Classrooms available in the two secondary education systems

	Secondary School Education Council	% new	Technical Professional Education Council	% new
Current classrooms	2061		1262	
New classrooms	584	28	168	13
Total:	2645		1430	

Source: ANEP, 1999b.

TABLE 6. Outcomes of aptitude tests in basic secondary education by discipline according to type of school, 1996—%

Proportion of students with pass level in Mathematics, April and November			
	April pass level (over 50%) level	November pass (over 50%)	Difference November/April
Sub-total pilot	15.7	29.7	14.0
Sub-total control	17.4	30.0	12.6
Average:	16.6	29.8	13.2
Proportion of students with pass level in Spanish Language, August and November			
	August pass level (over 50%)	November pass level (over 50%)	Difference August/April
Sub-total pilot	38.1	45.3	7.2
Sub-total control	30.9	32.9	2.0
Average:	34.2	39	4.6
Proportion of students with pass level in Experimental Sciences, April and November			
Sub-total pilot	2.3	20.3	18.0
Sub-total control	2.3	20.5	18.2
Average:	2.3	20.4	18.1

Source: ANEP, 2000e.

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

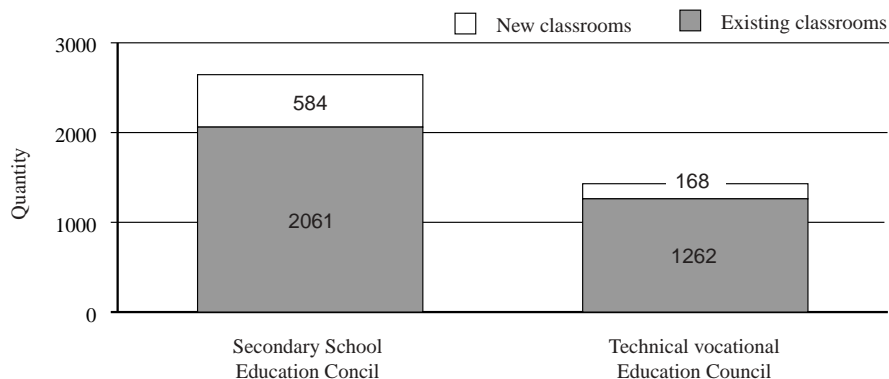
Quality

In order to carry out an evaluation of the contribution of the education reform to the quality of young people's learning, several studies have been published (ANEP, 1997 a; 1998 b-f; 1999a; 2000 b-f), since this has been the central topic of debate, not only within the academic community, but in society as a whole. As can be seen in Table 6, no marked differences in performance were found between the plans.

From this it can be deduced that the real impact of the reform is not directly on conceptual learning but on changes not quantifiable in terms of performance, since no account is taken of core pivots of the new competencies and skills necessary to perform in society, such as, for example, attitude, self-esteem, creativity, decision-making and teamwork.

Currently, given the reform's wide extension, its systemic nature, and the fact that its effects transcend the limits of the schools where it is applied, it is difficult, through comparisons of the census results to discern the causality of the difference.

FIGURE 1. Classrooms available in the two secondary school systems, 1999.



At the present time, in order to make a comparative analysis, data have been used that cover all secondary schools, since there is no other information available to make the comparison. It must be borne in mind that the only variables that differ are the type of test, the major investment in education and the general characteristics of the pupils as society changes. We understand that the effects found are directly or indirectly due to the reform as a whole.

TABLE 7: Percentage of passes in State and private secondary schools in Montevideo, and progress 1991–1999

		1991		1999		1991	1999
		%		%		%	%
Math.	State	16.5	1.0	51.5	1.0	100	312
	Private	54.8	3.3	79.6	1.5	100	145
Span.	State	22.3	1.0	57.6	1.0	100	258
	Private	60.8	2.7	83.0	1.4	100	137

Source: ECLA, 1992

In 1991 a test was administered to a sample group of pupils finishing basic education from all parts of the country and including the different educational sub-systems; it was carried out by ECLA. In 1999 a National Learning Census was held, including the whole universe of pupils finishing basic education and covered the areas of mathematics, language, social sciences and experimental sciences. The ECLA study states that the sample used is perfectly representative of the Montevideo secondary schools and that the test covered only the mathematics and language area. Therefore, only the educational results of the two tests were compared: Mathematics

and Spanish Language in State and private secondary schools in the city of Montevideo. These two studies did not attempt to be comparable, since no comparative technique was used, which limits the scope of analysis.

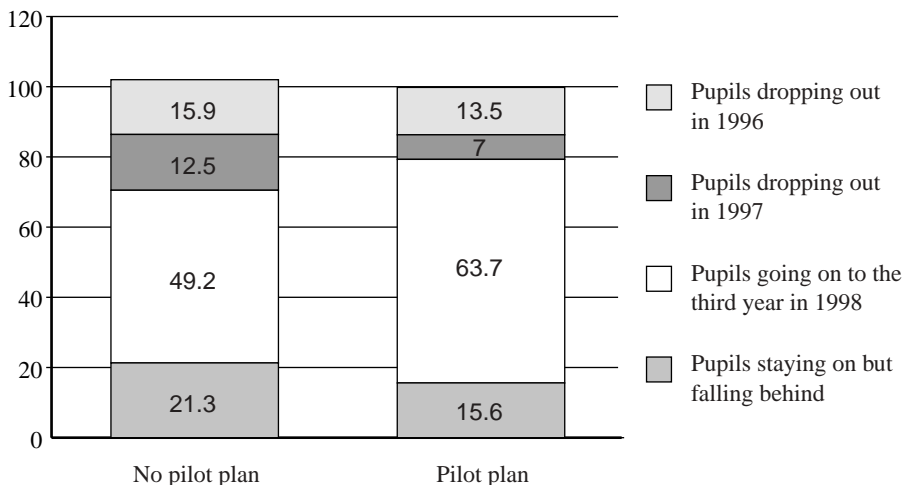
Firstly, the very low number of pass-level pupils in Mathematics and Spanish Language in the State secondary schools in Montevideo in 1991 is striking, in comparison with the figures for private secondary schools. However, the number of pass-level pupils in State secondary schools increases significantly more than in the private secondary schools by the time of the 1999 census. The difference in favour of the private schools is 3.3 times greater for Mathematics in 1991 and 1.5 times greater in 1999; for Spanish Language the respective difference is 2.7 and 1.4 times greater, as can be seen in Table 7.

There may be an effect from the type of test applied, but if we use the private students as referents, we can appreciate a much greater increase than that obtained in the private secondary schools, which keep a significant favourable difference, but nevertheless a marked improvement can be observed in the State secondary schools. Regardless of the values, this shows a democratizing trend in knowledge, allowing a broader percentage of students from the State secondary schools to achieve a pass level.

Equity

As can be seen in Figure 2 with the first generation of students, since its implementation the pilot plan showed a significant improvement. For each 100 students in

FIGURE 2. Evolution of the 1996 cohort according to type of school.



Source: ANEP. MESvFOD. 'Cuadernos de Trabajo N° 1'. 1999.

Basic Education Plan '86, only forty-nine reached the third year without falling behind, and with the application of the new Plan this increased to 63.7 out of each 100 pupils.

This is achieved even in a scenario where dropping out and repeater students are declining, which constitutes the greatest achievement in educational equity, since, as is shown by several studies (ECLA, 1990), the young people who drop out and repeat years in the system are closely associated with the lower socio-cultural classes. The fact that more young people reach the third year and that the percentage of repeat students and drop-outs is falling, with promotion values of 54% in the Pilot Plan and 39% in Plan '86, as is shown in the study of the 1996 cohort, represents an unprecedented effort.

As can be seen in Table 8, as pupils move up the education system, the difference in leavers declines between plans, to the point that in the fifth year 21.1% of young people in the Pilot Plan move up, and 18.9% in Plan '86. This difference is not significant, possibly due to the fact that the academic filter, which occurred previously at the basic education level, now does so at the Secondary School Certificate level.

TABLE 8. Progress of the cohort that enrolled in the first year of basic education in daytime State secondary school in 1996, corresponding to the basic education study plan (1996–2001).

	Total (%)	Plan '96 %	Plan '86 %
Started first year in 1996	100	100	100
Dropped out in 1996	15.9	13.5	15.9
Dropped out in 1997	12.7	7.0	12.5
Dropped out in 1998–99	20.8	21.3	20.8
Dropped out in 2000	8.7	10.4	8.7
Total pupils who dropped out 1996–2000	57.9	52.2	58.2
Passed first year in 1996 and re-enrolled	67.0	74.7	66.7
Passed second year in 1997 and re-enrolled	50.6	63.7	50.0
Passed third year in 1998 (completed BE in proper time)	39.4	54.1	38.7
Passed fourth year in 1999 and re-enrolled	28.3	36.3	28.0
Passed fifth year in 2000 and re-enrolled	19.0	21.1	18.9
Dropped behind in 2001	22.9	26.4	22.8
Behind in basic education	2.8	0.8	2.8
Behind in 4th	6.4	6.3	6.4
Behind in 5th	13.8	19.3	13.5

Source: ANEP 2000.

On the other hand, this means that social strata with a low cultural capital do gain access to this second educational level, completing it in the same proportion and with the same academic level in both plans. Also in 2001 there are more Plan '96 pupils who drop behind than Plan '86 pupils. These data indicate a greater inclination to study, possibly due to the fact that the Plan '96 pupils value education more highly, which motivates them to stay in the system.

It must be pointed out that the objective of the reform is universalization of basic education and this can be appreciated in the increase in enrolment, as well as in the larger number of students completing this stage, which increases the number of years of study by pupils from the most underprivileged homes (Table 9).

TABLE 9. Progress of enrolment in basic secondary education

	1985	1990	1995	2000	2002
Basic secondary education	78203	94767	92390	114771	125315
CETP basic secondary ed.	23728	15966	18131	14700	15675
Total:	101931	110733	110521	129471	(140990)
Private	16754	23494	21968	22100	–

Source: MEMFOD programme based on ANEP 2000a.

OBSTACLES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Despite the fact that the results obtained do not yet correspond to those anticipated, either by the designers of the reform nor by society in general, it is understood that it is going in the right direction, since there has been good progress and full understanding of the proposal. Although the reform was planned, implemented and monitored centrally, from the outset it listened to the actors who carried it out, gathering their experiences and modifying it when necessary, particularly with regard to implementation in schools.

However, it has been very difficult for teachers who did not initially take part in the launching of the reform to assume ownership of it, which produced numerous conflicts that hindered its development. This opposition meant that the academic community, instead of using those first years for research-action, by providing feedback for the initial proposal, devoted its efforts to the defence of axiomatic positions that made them more inflexible. For example, one of the key points of conflict has been the shift of subjects based on disciplinary specialization to integration into knowledge areas. In this case a lot of time has been devoted to confrontation instead of seeking agreements focused on teaching, with an academic debate still pending that will allow a more fruitful adaptation for the pupil.

The major obstacles have been the confrontations that paralyzed and radicalized attitudes. On the one hand, administrative and political timings that did not keep in step with the real times for appropriation of the innovations, thereby restricting joint progress, added to the authoritarian way the reform was received by teachers, despite the ideological agreements shared initially. On the other hand, teacher corporativism, on feeling excluded from decision-making, quickly adopted an attitude of disapproval, which hinders debate. This makes us see the importance in change processes of communication and negotiation areas and times, since society was excluded from discussion and decision-making and, what is worse, a favourable political and economic situation for introducing relevant changes that would have an effective impact on the system was wasted.

Cohesion or social anomie: a challenge for education

Although there are many goals to be achieved from the operational point of view, the greatest challenge lies in partially giving up the short-term view and adopting a longer-term perspective.

The teaching debate of the next few years should be focused on how to avoid education's reproductivist nature, bearing in mind contemporary problems such as infantilization of poverty and the creation of social ghettos that beset Uruguay at the start of the twenty-first century.

There is the conviction that these problems are not predetermined and immutable, and that since human beings forge their own destiny and therefore societies their own, the results depend in large measure on the degree of reception, reflection and awareness with which reality is conceived. Construction of the 'problem' and the choice of strategies used to overcome it define how robust that society is.

Education systems, particularly ours, are traditionally repositories of great social policies. The challenge to be addressed will be to balance the tensions between 'how much and what education is needed to avoid being excluded' and 'what conditions of educability are required to be able to be educated', without being paralyzed by the magnitude of these challenges. This is not simple. It needs the tenacious labour of educators who are aware of their historical duty, society's explicit recognition, both in resource allocation and in the appreciation of the work and decisions that set education as a priority for the country, recognizing it as the only path that can lead to an integrated society.

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Appendix

FORMAL EDUCATION IN URUGUAY 1999: ANEP												
	LEVELS	BODY	TYPE		LENGTH	AGE years	CENTERS		Nº PUPILS		OBSERVATIONS	
							STATE	PRIVATE	STATE	PRIVATE		
C O M P U L S O R Y	BASIC EDUCATION											
	PRE-SCHOOL	C.E.P.	urban		2	4-5	166	54	76'493	21'425		
			rural		1	5						
	PRIMARY	C.E.P.	urban	común	6	6-12	908	277	269'094	52'017	4 hours per day	
				full time	6	6-12	69		13'361		8 hours per day	
				rural		6	6-12	1188	0	21'529		4 hours per day
				special				76	0	7'828		Handicapped
					sub-TOTAL		2241	277	388'305	73'442	461'747	
	BASIC SECONDARY EDUCATION											
	BASIC	C.E.S.	urban	Basic Cycle	3	12-14	138	139	79'670	21'417	Plan 1986	
	SECONDARY						82		28'362		Plan 1996	
	EDUCATION		rural	Basic Cycle	3	12-14	6	0	554	0		
		C.E.P./C.E.S	rural	C.E.I.	3	12-14	5	0	250	0		
		C.E.P.	rural	7th 8 th 9 th	3	12-14	38	0	600	0		
	C.E.T.P.	urban	C.B.T.	3	12-14	72	0	13'296	0			
			Tech Ed.	3	12-14	2	0	275	0			
		rural	C.B.T.A.	3	12-14	7	2	721	120			
				sub-TOTAL		350	141	123'728	21'537	145'265		
				TOTAL		2591	418	512'033	94'979	607'012		
UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION												
N O N C O M P U L S O R Y	SEC. CERT.	C.E.S.	urban		3	15-17	151	-	84'638	-	141 with Basic Ed. & 10 only Sec. Ed. Cert.	
		C.E.T.P.	urban	Technologico	3	15-17	10	0	1'819	0	Different specializations	
				Agricultural	3	15-17	2	0	250	0		
	PROFESSIONAL TRAINING	C.E.T.P.		Basic	2	15-16	103	0	18'784		With full primary	
				Higher	2	15-16	103	1	20'065	3'937	Basic Ed. required	
					sub-TOTAL		266	1	125'556	3'937		
	TEACHER TRAINING											
	PRIMARY	Sec. Inst.	Primary Teach. Train.		3	18-21	2	0	4'885	0		
			Primary Teach. Train.		3	18-21	21	0				
		Teach Training College	Second. Teach. Train.		4	18-22						
Second. Teach. Train.			4	18-22	1	0	5'666					
SECONDARY	C.E.R.P.	Second. Teach. Train.		3	18-21	6	0	1'005				
				sub-TOTAL		30	0	11'556				
								TOTAL		649'145		
Source: based on bibliographical consultation		La Educación Uruguaya: Situación y Perspectivas I y II (98-99) Análisis de la Matrícula de Educación Primaria (99) Análisis de la Matrícula de Educación Secundaria (99)					Anuario Estadístico (INE 99) Uruguay Perfil de País (PNUD 98) Resumen Estadístico Anual (C.E.P. 99)					



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