

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN BUENOS AIRES (1820-1884)

Alina Silveira¹

CONICET – Argentina
alinasilveira@hotmail.com

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ABSTRACT

There has been little historiographical research carried out on education in Buenos Aires prior to the Common Education Act of 1884. This paper will focus on the educational system in Buenos Aires through the study of private schools owned by the English, Scottish, Irish and American expatriates who settled in the city as of 1820, and by their descendants. Research material has included advertisements for English-speaking schools in Anglo-Argentine newspapers, police records and the 1872 National School Census, as well as opinions from English-speaking citizens on children and the education of the offspring of expatriates. The study of these sources has shown that English language schools formed part of the varied schooling system of Buenos Aires and that they played a key role in the education of both the native and the foreign populations of the city. These schools offered a varied type of education, much more comprehensive than that of public schools or even other private schools, and they provided education to high-ranking members of local society by offering an alternative to the inferior or inexistent state education system during a great part of the nineteenth century

Key words: *Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana, education, Buenos Aires, British immigration.*

INTRODUCTION

The problem of education and schools in Argentina has been lengthily explored by historians in their quest to understand the building of a national identity from the end of the nineteenth century to the twentieth century. However, this topic was not of relevance during the first decades of the nineteenth century, when the former Vice-Royalty of the River Plate fought for its independence and organization. The construction of a national identity and of a national entity through education was not a problem for the politicians and intellectuals of the times. Lack of resources and qualified teachers, wars for independence and civil struggles caused the failure of state educational policies in the first half of the nineteenth century. This created a de-centralized and heterogeneous field of education which became open to educational systems provided by the Catholic Church, expatriate schools and/or schools owned by private individuals.

The present paper will research the schools founded by private English-speaking owners between 1820 and 1884. It is in 1820 when the investigation begins because it was

¹ Magister in historical research, doctoral fellow of CONICET and University teacher BA, English and Scottish immigration to Buenos Aires (1820-1880), has published several books that stand new players enter the scene: the British in the Rio de la Plata (1800-1850) "in Buenos Aires, a society that is changing. Between the colony and the May Revolution, Buenos Aires, Prometheus / UNGS, 2011. (in press). Logonautas History 3: Argentina and the world between the XIX and XXI, Boulogne, Puerto de Palos, 2009. Author of two chapters.

around this year that British immigrants began arriving in great numbers, attracted by the settlement projects offered, the Treaty signed with Great Britain, and the relative peace and stability achieved under President Bernardino Rivadavia. The research ends in the year 1884, when the Common Education Act, passed during the process of national organization, made education a part of the political agenda and modified the local education system.

The study of private schools in Argentina has not been intensely dealt with by local historiography. Academic papers on the education system have focused on the study of public schools after the 1420 Common Education Act of 1884, which guaranteed public, free and compulsory primary school education. The traditional interpretations on this topic were divided into two streams: the liberal and the revisionist ones. The former highlighted the development of the public education system under liberal governments and criticized harshly the education policies under the Rosas government. This historiographical approach saw the period following the fall of Rosas as one of great effervescence, resulting in the passing of the Common Education Act which provided a free and egalitarian system of education and the beginning of the development of social progress². Revisionists have refuted the pessimistic interpretations of the education system under the Rosas government, underscoring the strengthening of private institutions during this period³.

In the second half of the twentieth century, studies on the history of education questioned the simplistic images of the liberal historians when describing the successful development of public education. In the last forty years new interpretations of the Argentinian education system have increased the complexity of the situation and have offered more analytical interpretations. Education and schools were studied in connection with politics and the local economic production structure, and educational trends became objects of study themselves; similarly, research was conducted on the internal school environment (disciplinary tools, teacher training, marginality, among others), educational policies were analyzed, gender analyses were conducted within the educational sphere and new topics emerged related to schooling, teaching methods and ideas regarding childhood⁴. However, this new approach focused on schools and the educational system after 1884. There has been little study of education immediately after independence.

On the other hand, historians have also studied the situation in the past thirty years, particularly the role of schools in constructing a national identity, support for the homeland, imposition of a single national spoken and written language, in the development of a Republican civil myth and in the creation of a patriotic tradition⁵. Academic papers focused their attention on the education system from 1884 onwards and few researchers considered the situation prior to that date. The works of Carlos Newland and José Bustamante are the

² Juan P. Ramos, Evaristo Iglesias and Antonio Portnoy are some liberal historians.

³ See Antonio Salvadores for a revisionist point of view.

⁴ Some historians dealing with these topics are Adriana Puiggrós, Héctor Rubén Cucuzza, Mariano Narodowski, Juan Carlos Tedesco and Silvia Finocchio.

⁵ For example: Lilia Ana Bertoni, *Patriotas, cosmopolitas y nacionalistas. La construcción de la nacionalidad argentina a fines del siglo XIX*. (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001); Lucía Lionetti, *La misión política de la escuela pública. Formar a los ciudadanos de la república (1870-1916)*. (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2007).

best available studies on the history of education in Buenos Aires during the first half of the nineteenth century. Their work centers on the historical development of schools in the city of Buenos Aires at a time of political crisis and war, and in the context of a changing society which was only starting to open up to foreigners. They analyze the effects of this situation on the initial development of primary schools before the 1420 Act⁶. Mark Szuchman has studied education in Buenos Aires during the first half of the nineteenth century as an inroad to analyzing the city's society in those times⁷. However, none of these studies focused on schools owned by expatriates or the role they played in the local educational field.

From the field of studies on immigration, some researchers looked into the schools founded by expatriates and analyzed the importance of ethnic schools in a context of a scarce and unsatisfactory public sector offer⁸. The study of these schools presented the integration of immigrants within the receiving society, as schools became the space where the second generation of immigrants socialized and incorporated customs and cultural values which allowed them to assimilate into the receiving culture or preserve the ethnic identity of the parents. However, these studies were centered on the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the beginnings of the twentieth century and we have no information on the educational projects or the foreign schools in the first half of the nineteenth century.

To conclude, there are few studies on the system of education in the city of Buenos Aires prior to the Common Education Act. History of education has focused on education after 1884 and especially on public schools. Studies on immigration are only based on community schools belonging to ethnic groups and co-existing with state schools during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century. And historians working on the schooling system in Buenos Aires prior to the 1884 law have not dwelt with the development of educational institutions founded by expatriates. However, English speaking schools played an important role in education in the city of Buenos Aires.

This paper is meant to contribute a wider view on schools and education in the first half of the nineteenth century through the study of private schools owned by members of the English-speaking community. Political instability, the constant changes in educational policies, the start of foreign immigration, the break with Spain (the mother country), the close commercial ties with Great Britain, provided the background for the development of many private schools owned by members of the English, Scottish, Irish and American communities. This paper will consider how these schools became part of the city's

⁶ Carlos Newland, *Buenos Aires no es pampa. La educación elemental porteña. 1820-1860*. (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1992); Carlos Newland, "Enseñanza elemental y superior (1810-1862)" en *Nueva historia de la nación argentina*, (2007). Ricardo Levene *Historia de la nación Argentina (desde los orígenes hasta la organización definitiva en 1862)* (Buenos Aires: Planeta. Tomo VI.), 261-275; José Bustamante Vismara, *Las escuelas de primeras letras en la campaña de Buenos Aires (1800-1860)*. (La Plata: Asociación Amigos del Archivo Histórico, 2007).

⁷ Mark Szuchman, *Order, family, and community in Buenos Aires. 1810-1860* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988). Mark Szuchman "Childhood Education and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Argentina: the Case of Buenos Aires", *Hispanic American Historical Review*. Vol.:70 No 1 (1990): 109-138.

⁸ See Luigi Favero, and his pioneering study: "Las escuelas de las sociedades italianas en la Argentina (1866-1914)" en *La inmigración italiana en la Argentina*, (2000); eds. Fernando Devoto y, Gianfausto Rosoli (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2000).

educational system, what their importance was, and the characteristics of English schools, understood as being those educational institutions headed by members of the English, Scottish, Irish and or American communities, or advertised as such.

1. The British in Buenos Aires

The central authority based on Buenos Aires was dissolved in 1820, after a decade of political conflict and military clashes, and was succeeded by the rise of a great number of weak centers of power, independent of each other. In Buenos Aires, this situation gave way to a political crisis, followed by a process of construction of the State of Buenos Aires. During the government of Martín Rodríguez and his Minister, Bernardino Rivadavia, a new power group arose in Buenos Aires. It proposed a plan of reforms leading to a “modernization” of political structures, of the state, of the militia and of the economy⁹.

The new government also sought to attract a European labor force. Although several measures were taken (creation of an Immigration Committee and of settlement projects, treaties with European nations), the effectiveness of the measures was limited both by the political instability and the violence of the times and by the lack of experience in this type of projects¹⁰. Migration movements in general did not show significant changes, but there is a clear increase of British arrivals in the region around the mid-1820s. The Treaty of Friendship, Shipping and Free Trade with Great Britain, the colonizing projects of the Robertson brothers and of Beaumont and the increase in British interest in the new businesses which seemed to offer chances of spectacular profit, boosted the arrival of these immigrants. Although the total percentage of arrivals in the region was small, in the early 1830s the British immigrants had become the largest European community in the city of Buenos Aires¹¹.

Martín Rodríguez’s government soon fell from power due to internal divisions and quarrels, a war inland (caused by the attempt to organize a National State under a Constitutional Congress) and the war against Brazil over control of the Banda Oriental. After a period of internal political crisis, Juan Manuel de Rosas took over as governor of the province of Buenos Aires in 1829, and he remained in power until 1852¹².

The 1830s witnessed a new immigration cycle in the River Plate as a result of improvements in the international situation and of economic growth. The successive wars (wars for independence and civil wars) had depleted the labor force while the military conscription of the native population allowed foreigners to take up their jobs in the labor market when the locals were conscripted. These favorable conditions fostered the arrival of Spanish, French and Genoese immigrants, among others. British arrivals, though, did not

⁹ Tulio Halperin Donghi, *Revolución y Guerra* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1994); Noemí Goldman, *Revolución, república, confederación (1806-1852)* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1998).

¹⁰ Fernando Devoto, *Historia de la inmigración en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2004); José C. Moya, *Primos y extranjeros. La inmigración española en Buenos Aires, 1850-1930* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2004).

¹¹ Alina Silveira, “Los británicos en Buenos Aires: movimientos poblacionales, pautas matrimoniales e inserción económica (1800-1850)” (Tesis de Maestría en Universidad de San Andrés, 2008).

¹² Halperin Donghi *Revolución y*, Goldman *Revolución, república*.

follow the general pattern. The failure of the colonizing projects of the 1820s and of many British investments discouraged English and Scottish immigrants, and they lost their first place among the European communities in Buenos Aires¹³.

Rosas' hegemony came to an end in 1852 when an army headed by Justo José de Urquiza and supported by several inland provinces defeated the governor at the battle of Caseros. In spite of attempts to create a Confederation which would unite the provinces of the River Plate, Buenos Aires did not find the new political order satisfactory and separated. The territory was thus divided in two: the Argentine Confederation and the State of Buenos Aires. The much-sought for union would have to wait for a further decade. It is only in 1862 that Buenos Aires joined the Confederation and thus began, not without its conflicts, the process of construction of a national state on the basis of an economy that would rely on the exportation of agrarian products (1862-1880)¹⁴.

After the battle of Caseros, the process of immigration did not suffer great changes. From that moment on, the state took over a more important role in fostering immigration. Successive governments considered the role of immigration to be that of settling the "desert" and introducing the values and customs which were to be imitated by the natives if the country was to progress. The government encouraged the arrival of settlers from the more developed countries of Europe¹⁵. In the late 1960s about half of the foreign residents in the city of Buenos Aires were Italians, followed by the Spanish and the French. The British were only 4 per cent of the total amount of foreigners at that time¹⁶.

2. Education in Buenos Aires

The system of education in Buenos Aires during most of the nineteenth century was a heterogeneous and de-centralized system. In the first place, we find the public schools for boys, in charge of the State, while female education was in the hands of the Charity Society (*Sociedad de Beneficencia*), an institution administered by distinguished society women and supported with funds provided by the state and private donations.

In the second place were the lay schools, in the hands of private individuals, either local or foreign, who did not receive state funding and were financed through fees paid by pupils. They were not necessarily attached to any particular religious group, although they often included the teaching of religion in the school curriculum. This group of schools was heterogeneous. The best schools, called "*colegios*" or "*liceos*" (colleges or lyceums) were exclusive boys' schools which offered primary and secondary education. Besides these, there were smaller schools made up by a teacher and an assistant who offered classes in a room within a private house.

¹³ Silveira "Británicos en Buenos Aires".

¹⁴ Marta Bonaudo, *Liberalismo, Estado y Orden Burgués (1852-1880)* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1999 tomo IV); Tulio Halperin Donghi, *Una nación para el desierto argentino* (Buenos Aires: CEAL, 1995).

¹⁵ Devoto, *Historia de la inmigración, Moya, Primos y extranjeros*, María Bjerg, *Historias de la inmigración en la Argentina*. (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2009).

¹⁶ National Census of 1869.

In the third place were the elementary schools supported by churches or founded as volunteer associations. Convents offered free Catholic education and catered for the working class children (especially mulattos and *mestizos* or mixed-race children)¹⁷. Protestant churches also founded their own schools in the 1820s, when they settled in Buenos Aires, and they taught religion and their language of origin. At the same time, communities of immigrants offered members an education which often sought to preserve and re-construct the ethnic identity of the children of the immigrants.

Finally, some children were educated outside school institutions, through a tutor (often foreign-born) or some member of the family. However, hiring a private tutor was expensive, so that only the wealthiest members of the Buenos Aires society could afford this type of informal education for their children.

During the Rivadavia administration there was an increased development of privately owned schools. The atmosphere of greater freedom generated by Rivadavia's reforms gave private institutions enough autonomy to organize themselves, adopt new teaching methods and choose their curriculum. This, added to the increase in British, American and French immigration, favored the growth of private schools which also taught the basic contents of elementary education (the three Rs), the native tongue and religion (especially in Protestant schools). The close commercial ties with England also influenced the education system. After 1825 many institutions offered accounting, commercial arithmetic and English language in their curriculums.

The number of private schools grew side by side with the public schools in the 1820s. However, there were many more privately organized establishments, with a much larger number of pupils, than public schools. By 1824 there were 95 schools in the city of Buenos Aires, of which 80 were private and only 15 public. These schools catered for some 4,100 children, of which 60 per cent attended private institutions¹⁸. The state had tried to increase its participation in the local education system during the administration of Martín Rodríguez, but still most children were educated at private schools.

These schools continued flourishing under the Rosas government as a result of the policy of having public school students pay tuition¹⁹. Many teachers working in state schools changed to private schools, which survived because they offered their services to middle and upper middle classes, which could afford the monthly payment of tuition. Moreover, the increase of foreigners in Buenos Aires favored the creation of schools for the children of foreigners. This led to an increase in private schools and by 1846 there were 125 of them, catering for 6,700 students²⁰.

¹⁷ Convent schools disappeared in 1820 with the closing of the convents and re-appeared in the 1850s.

¹⁸ Newland, *Buenos Aires no es pampa*

¹⁹ After the 1830s as a consequence of the tightening of public sector financing, state funding of public schools was first restricted and then eliminated.

²⁰ Newland, *Buenos Aires no es pampa*; Antonio Salvadores, "El decreto del 26 de mayo de 1844, sobre las escuelas de la provincia de Buenos Aires". *Boletín del Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas*. Vol: VIII N° 39 (1929): 41-63; Antonio Salvadores, *La instrucción primaria desde 1810 hasta la sanción de la ley 1420* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos, Consejo Nacional de Educación, 1941).

The freedom which schools enjoyed under Rivadavia came to an end with Rosas. Two decrees attempted to increase state control over schools. The first one, in 1831, made it compulsory for all private schools to request authorization to the school inspector to open its doors, and then submit necessary evidence to support their morality, religion and capacity. Those schools whose teachers could not credit an adequate morality or Catholicism, or in which the Catholic dogma was not taught on Saturdays, were to be closed down. Rosas had an unfavorable view of the growth of schools in the hands of Protestant foreigners and understood that this had been caused by the scarcity of Catholic teachers, which had led the Protestant foreigners to take advantage of the situation to spread their religion and their language.

In 1844 a new decree strengthened the previous regulations, and the Ministry of Government took over the role of executing the rules which public officials had previously not enforced. The decree established that schools had to request authorization to open their doors and that authorization had to be renewed every year. It also forbade foreigners to teach local children and thus it forced teachers who wanted to keep their jobs to obtain national citizenship. Many Spanish teachers became citizens only to continue working, but few British teachers did, because the 1825 treaty supported them and they preferred to keep their nationality as they were protected by the British consulate. The new decree also forbade Protestant teachers from teaching Catholic pupils.

Although the regulations look very restrictive, in practice they were not enforced and many exceptions were granted, allowing foreign schools to continue operating. It is probable that, in view of the scarcity of local teachers and the superior training of foreign teachers, it must have been difficult to make do without the foreigners. On the other hand, with the end of public funding of state schools, it was inevitable that private schools would prosper. Protestant foreign schools were allowed to operate in spite of the new regulations, provided only Protestant children attended the schools²¹.

With the fall of Rosas, the previous regulations were annulled and a new period of greater freedom in education set in. However, the re-birth of free public schools had an impact on private schools, especially on those small institutions which had arisen after public schools had stopped receiving state funding. Many private schools had to close down (in 1846 there were 125 and in 1856 more than half of those were no longer in operation) but this trend was only temporary because as soon as the increase of public schools stabilized, the private sector made a comeback. New schools emerged as a consequence of the increase in population caused by immigration, the period's economic growth and the greater freedom allowed to private schooling. By 1860 there were 139 private schools attended by 6,400 students, although the number must have been larger but is not recorded due both to the lack of officials to conduct the survey and to the reticence of school teachers to provide such information. By 1870 there were 160 private schools attended by 9,000 students²².

²¹ Newland, *Buenos Aires no es pampa*, Salvadores.

²² Newland, *Buenos Aires no es pampa*, 189; Juan P. Ramos, *Historia de la instrucción primaria en la república Argentina 1810-1910 (Atlas escolar)* (Buenos Aires: Peuser, 1910).

The development of public and private schools affected the literacy of the local population. During the first half of the nineteenth century, according to Newland's research, there was a gradual positive evolution in the literacy rates²³. By 1855 nearly 47 per cent of the population of Buenos Aires could read (no major differences between men and women: 48% the former, 46% the latter)²⁴.

In 1872 the number of schools in the city of Buenos Aires had reached 237 (130 public, 107 private)²⁵. More than half of those schools were co-educational (the other half was divided into boys schools and girls schools)²⁶. However, 60 per cent of the public school population was female and 40 per cent was male. In private schools, the figures are inverted: 61 per cent were male and 39 per cent female. How did this affect the literacy of the population of Buenos Aires? In spite of the important presence of girls in public schools, in the 1860s and 1880s the male literacy rates were higher than the female ones²⁷. As regards the type of education each gender received, both were taught the same essential subjects, such as reading, writing, arithmetic and Spanish language. However, some subjects were reserved to boys (Geometry, Algebra, Natural Sciences and Latin) and others were specific to girls (needlework, singing, musical instruments). This situation was paralleled in the public schools (although subjects like Algebra, Chemistry and Latin were not taught). Concerning the age of schooling, more than 80 per cent of students, both in private and in public schools, were between the ages of 5 and 15. In public schools the greater proportion of girls to boys was constant at all age levels. It is only in the group over 15 years of age that the ratio of boys to girls was equal (this group represented less than three per cent of the total school population. Conversely, only in the under five-years-of-age group was there a majority of girls (61%).

Although this paper does not intend to analyze the gender differences in education and literacy, it is interesting to note the discrepancies in the schooling of girls and boys in public and private schools, as well as the increasing gap in literacy rates between men and women in the 1860s and 1880s when compared to 1855. Children attending private schools belonged to families who were well-off; their parents could not only send their children to school (which meant they were not required to contribute their labor to the family income) but they also had sufficient resources to assign part of their family budget to the education

²³ Newland, *Buenos Aires no es pampa*.

²⁴ The Charity Society girls' schools had gradually spread women literacy during the first half of the nineteenth century. See: Lucía Lionetti, "Continuidades y discontinuidades de las políticas públicas en la educación de las 'madres de ciudadanos' en la Argentina del siglo XIX" en *Educación, género y ciudadanía. Las mujeres argentinas: 1700-1943*. Editado por Pilar Pérez Cantó y Susana Bandieri (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2005).

²⁵ AGN, Buenos Aires-Argentina, 1872 Education Census of the Argentine Republic (the characteristics of the Census will be discussed below).

²⁶ 28 of the 107 public schools were boys only and 23 were girls only. In private schools, out of 130, 47 were boys only and 13 were girls only. AGN, Buenos Aires-Argentina, 1872 Education Census of the Argentine Republic.

²⁷ According to the 1869 national census, 67 per cent of males residing in the city of Buenos Aires could read and write, whereas only 47 per cent of women could do so. This gap decreased in the 1880s. According to the municipal census of 1887, male literacy stood at 87 per cent and female literacy at 81%. In both cases the gap was bigger than that of 1855. (AGN, Buenos Aires-Argentina, National Census 1869 y Municipal Census 1887).

of their children. This superior financial situation allowed the families to keep their children at school for a longer time, delaying their entrance into the work force. On the other hand, those who sent their children to public schools belonged to a less financially privileged class, and this implied that the continuity of their sons in the educational system reduced the family income. As soon as boys were old enough to join the labor market, they were withdrawn from the school system, especially in a social context in which the possibility of obtaining a better-paid job was not affected directly by literacy, given the high literacy rate of the local population²⁸. Daughters, on the other hand, could stay on at school, since domestic chores were probably more compatible with schooling than boys' tasks. And besides, the chores expected of women (sewing, embroidery, handicrafts, music, drawing, etc) were often part of the school curricula in the education of girls, so that their schooling was associated to what would later on be useful to women in domestic management, social life and the jobs derived from these skills. The increase in the literacy gap between men and women could be a consequence of the higher priority given in the second half of the nineteenth century to the greater relevance given in girls' education to handicrafts over reading and writing. This leads to a different problem, not considered in this paper: the difference in contents between male and female education and its effect on the possible insertion of women in the labor force²⁹. To conclude, this approach to the problem of education and gender is only descriptive; attention is drawn towards the need for further research to produce a more complex and solid interpretation of the differences in the education of boys and girls in the city of Buenos Aires.

3. Education for British immigrants

From 1820 onwards we have seen that the increasing arrival of English, Scottish, Irish and American immigrants in Buenos Aires, coupled with a policy of greater freedom in education under Rivadavia fostered the rise of private schools, among which were the English ones which taught the basic contents of elementary education –the three Rs- as well as the English language.

Pre-migration conditions influenced the development of these schooling ventures. As Protestant foreigners, the English-speaking communities were concerned with setting up a schooling system in which the new generations would receive an elementary education similar to that of their countries of origin. England and Scotland, as a result of the Protestant reformation, developed early on a system of education based on providing acquaintance with the Bible. In turn, as Stone points out, the struggle between Anglicans and Dissenters to convert the working classes set into motion a popular system of education³⁰. Later on, towards the end of the eighteenth century and during the nineteenth century, there was an expansion of education and of the literacy rates of England and

²⁸ Newland, *Buenos Aires no es pampa*.

²⁹ Some insights into the problem can be found in: Pérez Cantó y Bandieri *Educación, género y ciudadanía*.

³⁰ Education was taken by Dissenters and Methodists as a means to spread their religious ideas and increase the number of their faithful; Anglicans were thus driven to imitate the model and promote a certain degree of education among the working classes. Lawrence Stone, "Literacy and Education in England, 1640-1900" en *Past & Present* N° 42, (1969): 69-139.

Scotland³¹. Consequently, British immigrants had a wide educational experience and were used to receiving some type of instruction, elementary or not.

There were different types of schools where the British could receive some degree of education in the mother country. On the one hand there were the Sunday schools, widespread in Evangelical and Calvinist congregations, which taught mainly Bible reading, although some instruction in reading and arithmetic was also offered. This type of schools had two advantages: they could easily fit into the timetables of the working classes and did not involve great financial investment: there was no need for a special building or for paid teachers, and did not require an initial capital investment. On the other hand there were the day schools, among which were the grammar schools, which depended on the Official Anglican Church. These grammar schools taught Latin, Greek, English, arithmetic and writing. The non-Conformist Protestants, excluded from these schools, created their own educational institutions where, besides elementary education, they offered subjects like modern languages, Literature, Mathematics and Natural Sciences. These schools were funded by donations, voluntary subscriptions and fees paid by the parents (from two to five pence per week). They were also financially supported by the local landowner and the clergy. However, these schools did not satisfy the demands of those who expected more than just the basic skills. This group resorted to the *public schools*, privileged English schools which generally excluded the working classes³².

The pre-migration conditions affected the desire of these foreigners to develop schools that would satisfy their educational requirements, which did not all follow the same model. On the one hand, the parsons of the ethnic churches feared for the future of the children being raised in Catholic countries, which is why they strived to ensure they received elementary instruction that would keep them faithful parishioners according to the rules and tenets of their own religion. The heads of families, on the other hand, in general only demanded an education similar to that they themselves had received in their countries of origin.

The future of the new generations of British descendants being raised in Argentina worried some expatriates who publicly raised their voice through the press. A series of articles published in the English newspaper *British Packet* between May and July 1834 and signed by “Benevolus” contain an anonymous writer’s opinions on the importance of the education of children, since the future of society was dependent on it, because education was the basis of religion, happiness and civil liberty. In spite of this, this priority was not being taken into account in Buenos Aires, the writer added. Foreigners in Buenos Aires were “indolent when it came to offering children an education that would allow them to face the challenges of life with the success, honor and advantages provided by education”.

The cause of Juvenile Education, in point of importance, is second to none. It is the source of all that is great and honorable; the basis of true and rational religion; the center of

³¹ By 1900, literacy rates were 98% in Scotland and 97% in England and Wales. Stone, “Literacy and Education”.

³² On education in England and Scotland see: Stone, “Literacy and Education; Gillian Sutherland, “Education” en *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950. Social Agencies and institutions* editado por F. M. L. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996 Vol. 3).

*social happiness, and the cement of civil liberty. It fits a man for acting his part in the great drama of life with success, honor, and advantage (...) The cause advances slowly, not that its enemies are powerful, but because its friends are indolent*³³.

“Benevolus” also expressed his concern for the number of “ignorant, scruffy, noisy and abandoned” children who wandered around the streets without any useful purpose. Migration had broken the unity of expatriates and many of the old-country values had disappeared. In the process of transplantation men had become selfish and individualistic. Under these circumstances many had neglected their social and family duties, and plunged into intemperance and licentiousness. The writer concluded that parents were to blame for this situation, as they did not tackle the instruction of their children or support the institutions in charge of instructing the young. The main concern was the future of the descendants of foreigners, who were being brought up under these conditions:

*(...) A variety of causes have conspired in producing this deplorable result. Among these, the heterogeneous elements of which our foreign society is composed, may be mentioned as one of the most prominent. Men of the most opposite views and principles, from all quarters of the world, are blended together in one chaotic mass. The restraint of relationship and neighborhood, the almost instinctive influence of habit and custom, and that salutary deference to public opinions which operate so extensively and so benignly in long established and well regulated societies, are here wholly unknown. Broken and severed in the rude act of transplantation, these secret but powerful auxiliaries of virtue, order, and patriotism, have ceased forever. Released from their artificial restraints, the Emigrant, in too many cases, becomes a reckless adventurer; responsible only to those upon whom he is immediately dependent in his daily avocation, and utterly regardless to every consideration of character and reputation. In such circumstances, it is to be expected that many will become remiss in the discharge of their social and relative duties; and that others will plunge, as we daily see them, into all the excesses of intemperance and licentiousness... They bequeath to the world, in their hapless offspring, a legacy of ignorance and worthlessness, that must be removed and corrected by others, unless they are prepared to hazard the many future evil consequences that will infallibly result from them... Here, then, is the prolific source of evil; the culpable apathy, and the still more culpable irreligion and immorality of Parents...*³⁴

This writer’s viewpoint was not the only one to make the English-speaking press. Quite on the contrary, other writers underscored the virtues and successes of several English-speaking schools in educating their children in this same period. For example, there is constant praise for schools run by British foreigners coming from various sources connected with the education of English-speaking children (school-children’s parents, distinguished members of the English-speaking communities, etc.). They publicly expressed their satisfaction at the achievements of different schools and highlighted the spirit and intelligence of children and their constant progress. The image of these children was the exact opposite of that Benevolus had of them: while the latter described them in negative terms, other writers found them “*neat, healthy, cheerful lads, who went through the various exercises of the day with a self-possession, accuracy, and precision, that met with the unqualified approbation of the numerous and respectable attendance*³⁵”.

³³ *British Packet* 10/5/1834 p. 2.

³⁴ *British Packet* 17/5/1834 pp. 2 y 3.

³⁵ *British Packet*, 3/1/1835.

What caused this negative vision of the second generation of English speakers, their future in society and the state of English schools? As will be seen, schools run by English, Scottish, American and Irish founders seemed to be developing successfully, given the great number of students in the face of an increasing competition which diversified and became increasingly complex through time. Why was Benevolus annoyed? Why did he raise his voice publicly to draw attention to the education of the young? This type of discourse was frequent among ethnic leaders of other communities of expatriates, and the same complaint can be found among the English in the early twentieth century, as Seiguer has shown³⁶. The complaint was probably not about the quality of the education being provided nor about the lack of schools. Benevolus' dissatisfaction seems to be concerned with the inability to build an ethnic community among immigrants through education. This is why he constantly decries the loss of the mother country's values and the individualism of his fellow countrymen. Education would provide the English-speaking community with a cohesive element since it would transmit the values, customs and religious principles of the mother country, on which the English-speaking community would grow.

There was a significant number of English-speaking schools, many of them in the hands of skillful and prestigious members of the community. However, Benevolus' condemnation was that most of them did not purport to educate their children in "ethnicity." While these schools grew in number, the first attempts to create ethnic educational institutions failed, as will be seen, owing to the lack of pupils and resources. The problem was not that immigrant parents were not interested in the education of their children or that the quality of the education offered was low. Benevolus complained about the absence of ethnic schools, and was especially concerned with the situation of English and Scottish immigrants who could not afford the high fees of English-speaking schools for their children. If they did not attend these schools and the English-speaking communities did not support low-cost community schools, then children would end up being assimilated by the host country and would lose the cultural and moral values of their countries of origin.

4. Private English-speaking schools in Buenos Aires

Between 1820 and 1860 a large number of private English-speaking schools opened their doors in Buenos Aires. A list of schools which operated between 1820 and 1860 has been drawn up through the advertisements published in the *British Packet*, through police reports and through authorizations granted according to the 1844 regulations established by the Rosas government. The list contains a total of forty schools (although they were not all in operation at the same time) run by English, Scottish, Irish and American owners³⁷. These establishments provided children with a varied educational curriculum similar to that offered by other private schools, although in the latter religious education carried more weight on account of the local circumstances which limited Protestant schools and the spread of the Protestant faith (see Table A). On the other hand, English-speaking schools

³⁶ See: Paula Seiguer, "La iglesia anglicana en la Argentina y la colectividad inglesa. Identidad y estrategias misionales, 1869-1930" (Tesis de Doctorado en Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2009).

³⁷ *British Packet*; AGN, Buenos Aires-Argentina, Sala X: 33-4-9, Book 138, 33-5-10 Book 164; 33-5-6 Book 154; 33-6-1 Book 168; 33-6-2 Book 170.

had a strong commercial leaning (most taught commercial arithmetic and book-keeping), stronger than any found in the other private schools.

Classes in many of these schools included the teaching of Spanish. It was considered important for children to learn the local language correctly in order to accomplish a successful insertion in the social and economic spheres of the local community, especially when the return rates in the period were somewhat low. Learning the local language was essential because most of these foreigners would be staying in the area, as the possibilities of returning to the mother country were few³⁸. The decision to introduce the teaching of Spanish was well-received. For example, an English-speaking father publicly recorded in the *British Packet* that it was important for English-speaking children to learn not only the language of their ancestors but also that of the host country. It is true that the language could be acquired through the daily contact with the natives, but learning the language at school would allow the children to speak the language properly. At the same time, speaking Spanish would make it easier for the children to achieve a successful insertion in the country:

In regard to the more advanced boys, this was certainly wanted. The children of foreigner born and brought up here, must naturally, along with the language of their parents, speak that of the country; but without care and instruction they will not do it correctly. Their views and prospects are all connected with this country, -their chief intercourse in the prosecution of their future plan and avocation, must inevitably be with its native inhabitants; and the better they can speak their language, they are so far better qualified to act their part with respectability and advantage³⁹.

Many of these schools were run by English-speaking owners or their sons, and were clustered near Victoria Square (today's May Square) since it was there that most of the population lived. According to the 1855 Municipal Census, thirty per cent of the population lived in the central parishes of Catedral al Sud, Catedral al Norte and San Miguel. Consequently, thirty per cent of the school population was also located in these districts, as well as forty per cent of the schools and sixty per cent of the teachers⁴⁰.

Some of these schools played an important role not only among the English-speaking population but also among the population in general. Such is the case of Henry Bradish's English school. Bradish had studied in Liverpool, where he undertook ecclesiastical studies, although he later gave up the church. His school was very well known in the period. It was successively known as Academia Literaria Comercial, Academia Clásica Comercial and Academia Comercial Inglesa [Literary Commercial Academy, Classical Commercial Academy and English Commercial Academy] or *Foreign Mercantile Academy*. Some of its students were children of prominent political figures, such as the children of Admiral Brown, Carlos Ezcurra and José Antonio Wilde⁴¹. Colegio

³⁸ Well into the nineteenth century, the trip across the Atlantic was long and traumatic, the comforts offered by ships were minimal and travel costs were high.

³⁹ *British Packet* 26/9/1835 pp. 2 y 3.

⁴⁰ AGN, Buenos Aires-Argentina, Statistic Records of the State of Buenos Aires, 1856.

⁴¹ Salvadores, *La instrucción primaria*; José Antonio Wilde, *Buenos Aires desde setenta años atrás* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1960); Maxine Hanon, *Diccionario de británicos en Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Gutten Press, 2005); *British Packet*, 9/8/1834.

de la Independencia [Independence School], owned by Englishman Percy Lewis and founded in 1833 with the support of several *criollo* families, was also locally prominent for its education of native children. Some of the alumni were Prilidiano Pueyrredón, Palemón and Eliseo Huergo and Adolfo Arriola⁴².

Elizabeth Hyne's school, which was in operation between 1822 and 1823, was another English-owned school with a reputation in the local educational sphere. Mrs Hyne had studied in England and her school was both well-known and respected and a large number of parents chose it for their children: at one point the school taught around eighty children⁴³. In 1825 an Englishman recorded: "*Among the several schools there is one run by an English woman, Mrs Hyne, which is very popular; it has a school population of seventy pupils who are taught the English language, together with other essential things*"⁴⁴. When Mrs. Hyne returned to England, the *British Packet* regretted her departure and highlighted her educational success in spreading the learning of the English language among the local families⁴⁵.

Gilbert Ramsay, who studied at the University of Glasgow, was another English-speaking educator who became locally well-known. Initially, the Academia Argentina [Argentine Academy] sought to provide elementary education to the children of English-speaking expatriates but, as the quality of the education became prestigious, many *criollo* children also attended the school, especially because both Spanish and English were taught and no religious instruction was given (this was important to the Catholic *criollos* who wanted to attend schools run by Protestants). In 1835 there were around sixty children at Ramsay's school. Several parents and distinguished members of the English-speaking community praised the instruction at the school. For example, in 1835, a witness to the public examinations of the *Commercial Academy* publicly expressed his satisfaction at the educational achievements of the institution and congratulated Ramsay for his success in such a short time⁴⁶. Parents of children attending the school also praised the progress the children had achieved; they praised the school as well as Ramsay's role as an educator, and they highlighted the school's importance to the English-speaking community in Buenos Aires and to the new generations⁴⁷.

The number of children attending these institutions was uneven. We have been able to reconstruct the student population of six schools (Percy Lewis' Colegio de la Independencia, Ramsay's Commercial Academy and the schools belonging to Ana Bevans, Elizabeth Heathfield, Rosa Wilde de Barton and Catalina Wilson) through different

⁴² Hanon, *Diccionario de*, Newland, *Buenos Aires no es pampa*.

⁴³ Wilde, *Buenos Aires desde*.

⁴⁴ Un Inglés. *Cinco años en Buenos Aires, 1820-1825* (Buenos Aires: Solar/Hachette. 1962: 117).

⁴⁵ *British Packet*, 30/04/1842

⁴⁶ *British Packet*, 3/1/1835

⁴⁷ "I beg, in justice to him, and with your permission, to express my high admiration of the rich treat which he provided for his visitors on the occasion. No one, I am sure, could witness such a number of fine boys enjoying the benefit of Mr. Ramsay's superior tuition, without gratification. It required only to be present to be convinced of the high importance of his Institution to the foreign population of this city. Let him but persevere in his present career, and he will assuredly prove one of the greatest benefactor to his countrymen here. His skillful and successful method of instruction, must eventually manifest itself in the improved character and fortunes of many of the rising generation..." *British Packet*, 26/9/1835.

sources. In the case of the Ramsay Academy and Percy Lewis' school a list of outstanding students (those granted awards) has been drawn up for the years 1836 and 1837 in the former case and those published in the *British Packet* in 1834 in the latter case. In other schools we have used a list compiled by the police between 1848 and 1849 as a consequence of government control over schools (especially after the 1844 Act) since Protestant foreigners were forbidden to teach native-born children or Catholics. From these sources it is clear that only around forty per cent of the children attending these institutions belonged to English-speaking families, who were mostly Scottish or English; the rest were native-born or other foreign nationals⁴⁸. There is a possibility that the number of English or Scottish children might be under-represented as a consequence of the fragmentary nature of the sources used. Police records focus on schools which the government regarded as a problem: Protestant schools attended by native-born students or Catholics. If only the data from the Ramsay and Lewis schools is considered, the proportion of students of English origin is higher but not significantly so (it rises from 40 per cent to 52.87 per cent) but the proportion of non-English children is substantially lower (it drops from 50 per cent to 26.44 per cent). Thus, although it cannot be concluded that all English schools educated mainly local children, since our sources are limited, it is valid to consider that many of the English schools (and some to a greater degree than others) provided education to the children of English and Scottish families as well as those of natives and other nationalities.

Once Rosas fell from power and the restrictions on Protestant and foreign schools were removed, the number of schools geared to the English-speaking community increased and became more varied. According to the 1872 National School Census there were around 131 private schools, of which only 20 were English⁴⁹. Education offered in most of these establishments included reading, writing, arithmetic, drawing, Geography, History, Spanish language, French, musical instruments and handicrafts (only for girls) (Table B). When compared with the subjects taught in the previous period and in other contemporary private schools, the education offered by English schools was more thorough and varied. At the same time, the level of schooling imparted was higher than that of the average of private schools in 1872 (Table C). English schools were also better equipped as most had maps, drawing samples, clock, wall-boards and libraries (Table D). They were larger, allowing for more students and generally had better premises (well-lit and airy rooms, gardens, court yards, trees, better equipment such as desks, abacuses, colored plates, books, etc.). However, not all English schools were of the same size. The value of the property on which the schools were located varied between \$100,000m/c for the smaller ones (e.g. Byrne's English seminar for girls, Froggatto's Anglo-Argentine school, Scott's English School for Girls or McKen's English School for Girls) to over a million pesos m/c for the larger and more important ones, such as those belonging to George Ryan, to W. D. Junor or to Robert Bird. Overall, 1,521 children between the ages of five and fifteen attended these schools (with an average yearly attendance of 859). These *schools* were mostly run by men and women who had English, Scottish, Irish and United States origin or ancestry, while the teaching faculty was more varied.

⁴⁸ AGN, Buenos Aires-Argentina, Room X: 33-6-2 Book 170 and 33-5-10 Book 164, *British Packet*: 8/11/1834, 2/1/1836, 25/3/1837.

⁴⁹ AGN, Buenos Aires-Argentina, Room VII 1405 to 1414. The Census summaries can be found in the Statistical Records of the Province of Buenos Aires for the year 1872.

The data available from the Censuses is far from complete. Many school heads refused to participate or managed to avoid complying with it (some Census forms indicate that the heads did not volunteer data and there are some schools which lack a form, such as the Scottish school). Therefore, the newspaper advertisements were researched, and the sources used were the English *The Standard*⁵⁰ and the Mulhall brothers' *Handbook of the River Plate* for the year 1869. While the Census only shows twenty English schools, the press runs advertisements for some sixty-five schools, although some of these may not have been in existence in 1872 (either because they had already closed or because they were opened later) and others were located outside the city limits (although they catered to families living in the city of Buenos Aires). In all, then, when tallying the schools advertised in *The Standard*, in Mulhall's *Handbook*, and in the 1872 Census, there were in Buenos Aires a total of 79 English schools (some ten of which operated outside the city limits)⁵¹ thus doubling the number of English schools in the previous period.

Just as in previous decades, schools in the city of Buenos Aires were located mostly in the center of the city, in the vicinity of Victoria Square, which is where most of the population resided⁵² and thus most of the private schools. In 1860 the center of the city was home to 40 percent of all private boys' schools and 50 percent of all male students (although the proportion is lower in the case of girls' schools, 23 percent of which were in the city center, and 28 percent of all female students)⁵³. Towards the end of the 1870s the center of the city lost its prominence with only 26 percent of private schools and 26 percent of all private students attending classes there⁵⁴. Who were the students who attended these schools? Unlike what happens for the previous period, we lack information about the children who attended these schools. We only have a list of the results of the 1880 Christmas exams for the students from Reynolds' *Anglo Argentine Seminary*, published in *The Standard*⁵⁵. According to this list, out of forty students taking the exams, only one had an English surname. Although it is possible that they were all children of mixed marriages (local father and foreign mother) this still shows us an English school that is available to all kinds of students.

CONCLUSIONS

English private schools

The English schools open in Buenos Aires between 1820 and 1880 did not aim at drawing together the English-speaking population as ethnic schools do. On the contrary,

⁵⁰ The *Standard* issues consulted were chosen at random but focusing on the first three months of the calendar year which is when the school year started and the number of advertisements increased. The years reviewed are 1865, 1866, 1867, 1868, 1876, 1877, 1878, 1879, 1880.

⁵¹ *The Standard*, Mulhall, *Handbook of the River Plate* (Buenos Aires: edición del autor, 1869), AGN, Buenos Aires-Argentina, National School Census, Room VII 1405 a 1414.

⁵² AGN, Buenos Aires-Argentina, 1869 National Census

⁵³ AGN, Buenos Aires-Argentina, Statistical Record of the State of Buenos Aires, 1860.

⁵⁴ AGN, Buenos Aires-Argentina, Statistical Record of the Province of Buenos Aires, 1879. See: James Scobie, *Buenos Aires del centro a los barrios* (Buenos Aires: Solar Hachette, 1977).

⁵⁵ *The Standard*, 19/01/1880

very often they aimed at a much larger market which included natives, foreigners and speakers of English. To many British natives these schools could have fulfilled the role of helping to ease their integration to the native society, since the schools were attended both by English-speaking and native children, both English and Spanish were taught, and religious education was not included. Some occasional witnesses, such as English travelers who went round the area in the first half of the nineteenth century, were surprised by this and recorded it in their travel memoirs. For example, an unidentified Englishman found that “*At the schools ... English is an essential subject and, given the constant exchange which criollos have with Englishmen, Americans and other people who speak English, it will become increasingly convenient to learn it.*”⁵⁶ This fact drove many *criollos* to send their children to English-speaking schools, so that they could learn English, the language which became increasingly relevant when conducting local business, as well as book-keeping and arithmetic.

English schools had to accept all types of children to ensure a minimum amount of students to survive. They could not offer a specialized education to the English-speaking population because their numbers were limited (the 1855 Municipal Census recorded a British population of about 1,900 citizens)⁵⁷ and because of the increasing competition between English-speaking schools. However, these became an attractive option for the locals due to the possibility of learning English and accounting in a country in which relations with Great Britain had become closer due to the colonial crisis and the signing in 1825 of the Treaty of Friendship, Navigation and Free Trade, which brought about a continuous commercial contact between the two countries. Two further causes of local interest in English-speaking schools were the offer of a bilingual education (both in Spanish and in English) and the promise of excluding religious education (which was considered very important to the Catholic families wanting to send their children to schools run by protestants, and which was also important to those schools wanting to evade state controls in the times of Rosas). Many *criollos* must have chosen these schools for their children so that they would learn necessary skills (mainly English and book-keeping) with the purpose of tightening bonds with a community which exerted a great deal of control over local commercial activities. Moreover, English-speaking schools were often run by qualified teachers (some had studied in England or Scotland before emigrating to Buenos Aires and had University degrees).

In this way, English-speaking schools had a relevant role in the local educational scene. They offered a varied program of studies, more comprehensive than that of both state schools and other private schools, and provided education to prominent members of the Argentine society, while becoming an alternative to the precarious or inexistent state school system. Moreover, since English and Scottish children also attended the English-speaking schools, they were a vehicle for integration of the British community into Argentine society. At the English-speaking schools students were taught Spanish language and skills which enabled them to fit into the local labor market, Protestant instruction was not provided and at the same time the processes of socialization encouraged interchanges between local and British children attending lessons.

⁵⁶ Un Inglés. *Cinco años*: 118 . (Author’s underlining)

⁵⁷ AGN, Buenos Aires-Argentina, VII 1391 a 1404 1855 Municipal Census

Table A: Subjects (percentage) taught at English-speaking schools and private schools in Buenos Aires

Subject	Private schools	English schools ⁵⁸
	1835-1851	1833, 1837, 1838, 1843, 1845, 1851
Commercial arithmetic	35	71
Astronomy	11	14
Sewing and embroidery	83	14
Dancing	20	43
Drawing	54	43
French	66	71
Geography	60	86
History	31	29
English	63	71
Italian	17	0
Latin	65	57
Music	51	29
Religion	80	29
Book-keeping	56	71
Español	s/d	57
Geometría	s/d	29
Number of schools	35	6

Source: Newland, *Buenos Aires no es*: 167., *British Packet* 13/4/1833, 14/10/1837, 2/6/1838, 14/10/1843, 3/5/1845, 3/5/1845, 5/4/1851

Table B: Subjects (percentage) taught in the English-speaking schools in the city of Buenos Aires (1872)

	Private schools	English schools
	%	%
Reading	91,60	100
Writing	93,13	100
Arithmetic	90,84	100
Algebra	19,08	30
Geometry	25,95	20
Drawing	38,17	65
Geography	80,15	95
History	61,83	85
Physics	12,98	15
Chemistry	10,69	15
Natural History	45,04	20
Agriculture	7,63	20
Spanish	84,73	100
French	58,78	85
English	38,93	90
Italian	17,56	10
German	7,63	15

⁵⁸ Bradish' school, Commercial Academy, Colegio Argentino de San Martin, George Clark's school, English School

Latin	20,61	40
Other languages	3,05	10
Singing	22,14	25
Musical instruments	38,17	60
Handicrafts	54,96	50
Other subjects	22,90	30
Number of schools=	120	20

Source: AGN, Buenos Aires-Argentina, Sala VII 1405 a 1414 National School Census,

Table C: Classification of children according to their skills, percentages (1872)

	Private schools	English schools
Good reading skills including correct punctuation marks, of all types of written texts, prose and verse, printed and handwritten.	33,02	47,99
Writes on dictation including all necessary punctuation marks.	29,35	35,44
Numeracy, including the four operations with all kinds of numbers	20,20	24,98
Knowledge of theory of proportion and its applications	14,18	23,14
Spanish pronunciation skills	16,27	16,63
Knowledge of syntax, logical analysis and composition skills	16,16	25,90
Knowledge of Argentinian geography	15,55	36,62
General knowledge of geography, physics and politics	16,27	32,61
Number of students=	9.086	1.521

Source: AGN, Buenos Aires-Argentina, National School Census, AGN RoomVII 1405 to 1414

Table D: Teaching resources in schools (1872)

	Private schools	English schools
	%	%
Maps	61,83	85
Natural History illustrative plates	19,08	30
Drawing samples	29,01	50
Clock	76,34	90
Geometry solids	16,79	20
Geography globes	33,59	40
Abacus or counting board	34,35	50
Physics instruments	8,40	15
Wall boards	69,47	80
Library	50,38	60
In good state of repairs	40,46	55
Number of schools=	120	20

Source: AGN, Buenos Aires-Argentina, National School Census, AGN Sala VII 1405 a 1414

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