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# Reorganization and educational reform in Jujuy (Argentina) during Peronism. The Common and Special Education Law (1946-1952)

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*Abstract.* This study analyzes the transformations in the educational field that occurred during the first Peronist government in Jujuy (Argentina). We focus particularly on the reorganization and reform of the education system that followed the enactment of the Common and Special Education Law (*Ley de Educación Común y Especial*) in 1946. In this task we focus mainly on primary education in the district, as well as highlighting the role of the then Minister of Education in Jujuy: Shukri José.

*Keywords:* Educational change; education policy; education; Peronism; illiteracy; Shukri José; Argentina.

## Introduction

The educational policies implemented in Argentina during the first presidency of Juan D. Perón (1946-1955) undoubtedly had significant results throughout the country. Various studies have pointed out the achievements of this populist administration in the field, among them: the expansion of the education system on all levels, an increase in the number of schools, a decrease in levels of illiteracy, government support for technical education, and reforms of the education system (Plotkin, 2007; Torre & Pastoriza, 2002).

Regarding these reforms, it is worth noting that the Peronist state, in accordance with the spirit that reigned in the post-war world, implemented a series of policies related to planning and administrative centralization that led to state intervention in the economic, financial, and social spheres throughout Argentina. To this end, and among other measures, already existing government entities were reorganized and new ministries were created, such as the Ministry of Education in 1949 (Cammarota, 2010).

Within this national context, various provincial governments decided to put into practice these changes and transformations on the local level. While there are many studies on Peronism, these generally concentrate on developments on the national level or in Buenos Aires. But recently, studies taking an “extra-centric” approach, examining Peronist government in the provinces and territories of the country, have begun to appear (Macor & Tcach, 2003). These studies concentrate on the initial formation of these Peronisms, as well as on the role of the state and local politics.

Jujuy has not been exempt from this trend, and several works have been published about Peronism in the province.<sup>1</sup> But despite the value of these contributions, there has been very little research about the behavior of those who were in charge of designing education policies. At the same time, we know little about the characteristics and scope of these state interventions, especially in Jujuy province, which had very high rates illiteracy when this political experience was initiated. As noted, the most studied provincial case is Buenos Aires.<sup>2</sup> Analyses of this case tend to concentrate on the results of the policies implemented, in addition to some other aspects such as the

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1 Outstanding studies include those by Adriana Kindgard (2001) and Marcelo Jerez (2016, 2013, 2012a, 2012b), who examine the history of social policies, though concentrating on housing and health.

2 Some studies have tried to break with this traditional scheme, including Ivana Hirschegger (2010), Miguel Somoza Rodríguez (2006), and Jorge Luis Bernetti and Adriana Puiggrós (2006).

modification of the education system.<sup>3</sup> In general terms, what has been highlighted are the initiatives of various officials in this sphere, from the time that Domingo Mercante was governor until the final approval of the Common and Special Education Law in 1951 (Petitti, 2011).

As a contribution to filling this vacuum, in this article we focus our attention on the transformations in the educational sphere carried out by the first Peronist government (1946-1952) in Jujuy province. In particular, we analyze the reorganization and reform of the education system that followed the approval of the Common and Special Education Law at the end of 1946. At the same time, we highlight the role of this law's primary proponent and one of those in charge of the educational area during this period: Shukri José. This experience would have significant implications for his professional career, even though it ended with his leaving public service in 1952. However, since there is no research on these subjects, both the details of Peronist education policy in Jujuy and the work of the main actors involved were almost unknown until now.

This study provides a different image of government policy in this period: that state intervention in the educational sphere promoted a series of transcendental changes in a province with serious problems of illiteracy. Thus, in addition to large-scale school construction (among other policies implemented), there was a reform of the education system that included varied and important measures such as expansion of compulsory education, improvement of teachers' working conditions, and administrative reorganization of the education system. Shukri José played a distinguished role, first as a member of the provincial General Council for Education (Consejo General de Educación, CGE) and later as head of this state agency, during which time he expanded government activities. Despite these intense efforts, José suddenly abandoned his public role, perhaps thereby revealing certain tensions that existed within the Peronist government of Jujuy.

This situation leads us to pose certain questions: what were the characteristics of illiteracy in Jujuy at the beginning of the Peronist years? What were the most relevant aspects of the Common and Special Education Law? What other measures were taken to increase access to basic education in the province? How did José enter government? What were his activities during the Peronist government? What made him leave public service? What tensions and conflicts occurred with other government entities at the time these education-related activities unfolded?

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3 These include historical studies by Mara Petitti (2015, 2011, 2016) and Adrián Cammarota (2012, 2010).

To answer these questions, we explore the Peronist government's activities in the field of education in Jujuy province. We concentrate primarily on primary education, leaving the analysis of what took place in secondary and post-secondary education for future research. When it comes to a period as extensively studied as that of Peronism, we think that there remains scope for producing new knowledge through the formulation of new questions that decenter the traditional focus on the Rio Plata area by looking at other regions of this large country. This historical study is a contribution to this shift in focus.

### **Education in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

In geographical terms, Jujuy can be divided into four regions: the highlands, including the Humahuaca canyon and the puna; the lowlands, made up of the central valleys where the provincial capital is located; and the predominant environment of moist forests on the mountain slopes and subtropical valleys that constitute the primary sugar production area.<sup>4</sup> The growth of sugar production starting in the second half of the 1920s was one of the factors that played an important role in the province's demographic growth.

Other economic activities that led to an increase in Jujuy's population included large-scale mining in the puna and some important agricultural production – such as tobacco – in the central valleys. But population growth very quickly exposed the province's deficiencies in areas such as education, housing, and health. One illustration of this is that, at the time, various localities did not have first aid centers or hospitals (Fleitas, 2006). In addition, according to the 1947 census, only 30% of the population of the province owned their own homes, one of the lowest percentages in both the region and the country and surpassed only by Buenos Aires, where the figure was 18% (Jerez, 2012a).

In the area of education, Jujuy's greatest problems were those associated with its high level of illiteracy. While national censuses indicate that the province had significantly increased the percentage of children attending school (23% in 1869, 23% in 1895, 44% in 1914, and 73% in 1943) towards the end of the period studied, illiteracy among youth and adults in the 1940s remained high in comparison to provincial districts. The highest

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4 Jujuy province is made up of the following departments: Capital, San Antonio and El Carmen (in the central valleys); Ledesma, San Pedro, Valle Grande, and Santa Bárbara (in subtropical valleys); Humahuaca, Tilcara and Tumbaya (in the canyon); y Cochinoca, Rinconada, Yavi, Susques, and Santa Catalina (in the puna).

levels of illiteracy existed in rural areas, though levels in urban areas were also worrisome.

As can be seen in Table 1, until 1947, illiteracy in Jujuy among those 14 years old or older was higher than that in neighboring provinces such as Tucumán and Salta, as well as other regions such as Mendoza or Córdoba.<sup>5</sup> It is also interesting to note that in the northeastern region there was a high proportion of uneducated women and a large imbalance between residents of urban and rural areas. Thus, while in Jujuy 25 of every 100 people could not read or write, in rural areas this situation was more critical, with more than 50% of the population lacking basic education.

Table 1  
Illiteracy among those aged 14 and older in the provinces of Jujuy, Salta, and Tucumán in 1947: total by area and sex (in percentages)

Province	Illiteracy	Urban areas	Rural areas	Male	Female
Jujuy	35.1	21.3	43.3	26.2	45.8
Salta	29.8	13.5	41.1	25.0	35.1
Tucumán	21.1	14.9	28.3	19.7	22.5

Source: Dirección Nacional del Servicio Estadístico (1951); compiled by the author.

In addition, the data provided by the fourth School Census (*IV Censo Escolar*) in 1943 allows us to examine levels of illiteracy in the interior of Jujuy province (Table 2). It shows that the central valleys had the lowest levels of illiteracy while the canyon, puna, and subtropical valley areas had the highest percentage of illiteracy among young people aged between 14 and 21. According to this census, two of the main causes for this lack of schooling were youth leaving school in order to work, and the lack of adequate schools.<sup>6</sup>

5 While the percentage of illiteracy among those aged 14 to 21 in Mendoza and Córdoba was 9.6% and 7.6% respectively, in Jujuy it reached 16.9% (Consejo Nacional de Educación, 1948).

6 This census notes that the principal causes of illiteracy, in addition to poverty and parents not sending their children to school, was lack of schooling, the home's "distance from the school", and leaving school because of the "need to work" (Consejo Nacional de Educación, 1948, p. 274).

Table 2  
 Illiteracy among 14 to 21 year olds in Jujuy in 1943, by departments and sex  
 (in percentages)

Regions	Department	Illiteracy	Male	Female
Central valleys	Jujuy Capital	9.1	7.1	10.9
	El Carmen	10.5	10.5	10.5
	San Antonio	10.1	5.7	15.4
Subtropical valleys	Ledesma	15.6	14.7	16.6
	San Pedro	14.7	13.1	16.5
	Valle Grande	21.6	10.0	33.0
Humahuaca Canyon	Humahuaca	25.7	9.0	43.9
	Tilcara	25.0	12.9	38.7
	Tumbaya	19.9	10.4	30.5
	Yavi	32.2	15.3	49.7
Puna	Santa Catalina	29.9	13.0	46.1
	Cochinoca	15.0	5.8	25.9
	Rinconada	29.9	18.4	42.8

Source: Consejo Nacional de Educación (1948); compiled by the author.

The lack of schools had been a constant problem in the province for some time. In addition, the majority of what schools existed were located in private buildings, and their rent payments were often delayed. Already in 1896, the highest-level educational institution demanded that municipalities pay rent for the buildings in which schools were located. At the time, the concern of this government agency was that “many property owners are tired of waiting and having lost almost all hope of being paid have declared their intention to ask for the eviction of schools from the buildings they owned”<sup>7</sup> (*Boletín de Educación*, 1896, p. 111).

Decades later, in the 1930s, this deficiency did not appear to have improved. Governor Arturo Pérez Alisedo, in his inaugural message to the Legislature noted the persistence of the problem. He made it clear that between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup>, very little had been done by the government to upgrade the public education infrastructure in the province. Thus, the Governor concluded that: “When it comes to schools [...] it is my duty from this moment to inform V.H. [regarding] the urgent need to have our own facilities that provide the

7 All translations from sources in Spanish are by *Apuntes*.

necessary conditions for teaching, which various schools lack” (*Mensaje del gobernador*, 1934, p. 11).

Another factor that contributed to the high levels of illiteracy were the serious sanitary problems in the province, which seriously discouraged students from staying in school. In addition, we should keep in mind that during this period, Jujuy had the highest infant mortality rate in Argentina since it was a frequent victim of diseases such as diphtheria, smallpox, typhus, whooping cough, malaria, and tuberculosis, and had few health facilities and few resources to maintain those that existed.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, the living and working conditions in Jujuy, especially those of the poorest sectors, compelled entire families to migrate to other localities in order to improve their straitened economic conditions. This meant that many students had to leave school during the school year. One of the places to which families often migrated, especially during harvest time, was the prosperous sugar-growing area. This is evident in the records of Provincial School No. 38, located in the provincial capital, which noted at the beginning of the 1940s that: “The period when attendance goes down is September and October as a result of various families migrating to the sugarcane mills” (*Boletín de Educación*, 1951, p. 24).

The laborers who arrived to the sugar-growing area during this period came from different parts of the province – such as San Salvador de Jujuy – but most were from the canyon and puna areas. While sugar-growing establishments had schools of their own, these seem to have been primarily for permanent workers. Thus, it can be inferred that many of the school-aged children of the numerous temporary workers did not attend school, primarily spending their time helping their parents with the sugar harvest.

This critical educational situation caught the attention of public and government officials in the years before the emergence of Peronism.<sup>9</sup> The provincial government was aware that to remedy this situation, it was necessary not only to increase the number of school buildings but to implement a broader approach that included reform of the education system, in place since the end of the previous century. Thus, in May 1943 the Conservative

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8 One illustration of the effects of these diseases is provided by the records of Provincial School No. 38 in Jujuy’s capital city. A 1933 entry read: “Attendance was good until after the winter vacations, when classes started again the number of students was low due to the flu and a cruel whooping cough epidemic which spread in an alarming way, with many children dying” (*Boletín de Educación*, 1951, p. 18).

9 A local morning paper, when analyzing the 1943 school census, expressed its astonishment that out of a total of 24,791 children aged 6-13 (i.e., of school age), 4,535 had received no schooling. In addition, of 16,346 youth between 14 and 21, “2,937 were irredeemably illiterate” (*Diario Crónica*, 1944, p. 1).

governor, Fenelón Quintana, told the legislature: “When it comes to the reform of school legislation, an advisory commission was named at an opportune time, made up of individuals specialized in the topic which is studying a broad project of reforms ranging from the Education Law to the internal regulations of the schools” (Mensaje del gobernador, 1943, p. 11).

On June 4, 1943, the Conservative government of Argentina was brought down by a military coup that quickly took control of all the country’s provinces. In Jujuy, the new de facto authorities returned to the discussion of social problems, especially those linked to education. But in this case, the provincial government could also count on the participation of Jujuy Radical Party leaders, who prepared a large number of projects to deal with a variety of long-standing social demands that had previously been blocked by the obstructionist Conservative administration. Without doubt, a new era was beginning in the country and in the provinces, both in politics in general as well as in social policies in particular.

### **The emergence of Shukri José in the field of education at the beginning of Peronism**

During the first four decades of the last century, political competition in Jujuy, like the rest of the country, primarily involved Radicals and Conservatives. The Radical group, especially the Yrigoyenists led by Miguel Tanco, had the greatest degree of popular support and, despite the undeniable political power of the Conservatives, had come to power various times.<sup>10</sup> After the June 4 coup, it was on this political sector that the new officials primarily relied. This is why various leaders from the Yrigoyenist Radicals began to occupy positions in the new government.

Thus, Teodoro Saravia was designated the head of the provincial General Council for Education (Consejo General de Educación, CGE). He was a teacher and an experienced Radical party member who had held the same position in 1920. The CGE was a dependency of the Ministry of Government and had been the highest authority in the area of education since its creation in 1893.<sup>11</sup> This body was fully institutionalized three years later with the promulgation of the Common and Special Education Law

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10 Radical Party rule in the province included the administrations of Carrillo (April 1918 to April 1921), Córdova (April 1921 to January 1924), Tanco (September 1929 to September 1930), and Bertrés (May 1940 to January 1942).

11 This body was the heir of the Education Commission, created in 1882 to oversee primary school instruction, and was ratified by the first Education Law in the province, approved in 1885. This commission was made up of a president, a secretary inspector, and three members named by the provincial governor (*Ley de las escuelas primarias, 1885*).

of the Province of Jujuy, which established that overall administration be conducted by the CGE, made up of a president and three members named by the governor, although only the president needed the approval of the legislature. Terms were for three years and re-election was permitted (*Boletín de Educación*, 1896).

Towards the end of 1943, Colonel Emilio Forcher was named the interventor of Jujuy and immediately proclaimed his strong commitment to fulfill the principal tenets of the June 4 Revolution. In his speeches, Forcher stressed the morality of the leadership sector, breaking with the corruption of the past. When it came to social policy, he set his sights on turning the government into an intermediary between capital and labor, while also promising to turn his attention to the most important needs of the population (“Jujuy. Intervención federal,” 1945).

With this in mind, the government promoted the execution of a series of public works aimed at addressing the most urgent deficiencies in the province. The most important projects included the construction of health centers, public buildings, housing and, of course, schools in different regions of the province. The government officials doubtlessly were aware that one of the main factors that contributed to the high rates of illiteracy was the lack of school buildings.<sup>12</sup>

Another important initiative during this period was a study into reorganizing the education system, as well as teachers’ promotions, job stability, and salaries. But unlike this administration’s construction activities, which included the initiation of school construction, these first steps did not lead to concrete results during the period. Although the attention given to these matters did demonstrate the government’s predisposition to respond to these long-standing educational demands, the whirlwind of political developments did not allow for this work to be finished.

In late 1945, the Labor Party was created in Buenos Aires, after the emblematic 17 of October. It would support the election of Juan D. Perón, while in Jujuy Tanco was among the strongest candidates capable of representing the new party. Nevertheless, the old caudillo led a new political space which was separate from the Labor Party and named the Yrigoyenist Radical Civic Union. This was the platform from which Tanco gave his support to Colonel Perón. In the new elections, the young Radical leader,

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12 An official publication stated: “One of the most serious problems that affects teaching is the lack of adequate premises both in the city of Jujuy and in Humanhuaca Canyon and, above all, in the Puna. This aspect of education has been tackled using broad criteria and its implementation, which has already started, will allow us to have, in a few years, premises that are comfortable and hygienic for all the schools in the province” (*Revista Reflejos*, 1944, p. 12).

Alberto Iturbe, was chosen as the candidate for governor of the province after Tanco decided to compete for a seat in the Argentine senate.

The February 1946 elections gave the political forces who supported Perón in Jujuy a significant victory. Not only did they win the governor's office, but also the majority of provincial and national legislative seats. The new governor was accompanied by a political team made up of both new and experienced leaders. A long-standing Radical activist, engineer Juan José Castro became the vice governor, while a young lawyer, José Humberto Martiarena, took charge of the Ministry of Government. Martiarena, a few days after he was appointed, expressed his commitment to solving three of the province's biggest problems: health, education, and housing (*Diario Jujuy*, 1947, p. 18).

Martiarena, 32 when he took office, was a member of the group of young leaders that Tanco had brought into the party.<sup>13</sup> His ministry was in charge of justice, health, and education and at an early stage he joined the "war on illiteracy and for teacher status" (*Álbum del nuevo Jujuy*, 1946, p. 10). Publically, he claimed that his first projects included the creation of many schools. However, the construction of school buildings had started during the preceding government, and thus he was committing to continue this work. In any case, Martiarena did propose certain changes:

To create all the schools necessary and to increase the number of teachers. But more especially, and in this we contribute something new, we will give teachers the status that they deserve and to do this, the first thing is to review their economic situation, providing them with a honorable salary. [At the same time] we will create stability but we will not do this while the employees that will be benefited are not rigorously selected and have not demonstrated they are qualified to be part of the permanent civil service of the province. (*Álbum del nuevo Jujuy*, 1946, p. 11).

The minister was accompanied in these activities by political actors that contributed to achieving the necessary changes in the field of education. Tomás del Campo was named president of the CGE. He was another veteran Tanco leader who, unlike his predecessor, had held various public offices unrelated to education.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, this educational institution would

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13 Like many of his fellow party members, Martiarena was part of the de facto administration that took power in 1943, when he was the secretary and legal representative of the Yrigoyenista Radical Civic Union. (Jerez, 2014).

14 During the period that the Radicals were in power, Del Campo was the mayor of El Carmen,

soon include a young official who was set to stand out for his professional work, which led to the fulfillment of many long-standing demands. This man was Shukri José, who became a CGE member and then vice president.

This political actor was born in 1919 in the city of Quiaca. He attended elementary and high school at the Normal School of Humahuaca and obtained his certification as a “normal national regional teacher” in 1938. Two years later, he moved to Buenos Aires to continue his university studies in the Faculty of Humanities and Education Sciences in the city of La Plata. He graduated with the title of Professor of Mathematics and Physics. In 1943, he returned to Jujuy and soon became a teacher at the Normal School and the National High School in the capital city. It was during this period that Shukri José began his political activities, engaging with the Tanco group. This occurred at a time when the political group was enriching its human capital with young leaders who not only became part of the group but also took on important responsibilities in the CGE.

Another political figure who supported José’s efforts to implement far-reaching changes in the area of education was Teodoro Saravia, the former president of the CGE and then national deputy. As well as improving the state of education in the province through various projects and initiatives<sup>15</sup> in the parliament, he contributed the knowledge and experience he acquired during the years that he was a government official in the area of education. With his support and that of Minister of Government Martiarena, José rapidly recovered, and proceeded to study the projects of the Yrigoyenist Radicals and promote a series of transformations in the provincial education sphere.

### **Restructuring and educational reform: the Common and Special Education Law**

In contrast to what occurred on the national level in 1943-1946, when new public entities and structures were created (Berrotarán, 2004), at the beginning of the Peronist government in Jujuy things were the similar to 1943, with the possible exception of the area of sanitation.<sup>16</sup> The educational

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then Minister of the Treasury and, at the beginning of 1940, chief of police, inspector general of irrigation, and inspector general of courts and civil registry offices.

15 Most of the projects presented by this national legislator were related to the management of funds for constructing various educational establishments in the province. Thus, for example, in 1946 Saravia presented a project for the creation of boarding schools in the canyon and the puna, with special attention given to teaching children about weaving, raising sheep, and growing fruits and vegetables (*Diario Crónica, 1946*).

16 In 1942, a process of administrative reorganization of health services began when Law 1561 was approved, creating the Provincial Office of Sanitation to replace the Hygiene Council (Ley de

area not only followed this general trend but was still guided by the basic tenets of Law 1420 (*Ley de Educación Común*, 1884). This was the first law that regulated education in the province and was passed in 1885. It imposed obligatory elementary education for all children 6 to 14 years of age.

Later, in 1896, this law was modified, reducing obligatory school education to children aged 7 to 14. Without going into too much detail about the novel aspects of this law, it should be noted that in its second article, it only required “teaching that essentially educates in matters that provide knowledge that is practical and direct and immediately useful for those being educated” (*Boletín de Educación*, 1896, p. 93). At the same, in general terms, it stipulated the responsibilities of schools, teachers, and the CGE. With the advent of the Peronist government, a new opportunity emerged to change this outdated legislation, renewing old discussions and demands in the field of education.

It was with this goal in mind that José, as a member of the CGE, prepared a program that introduced substantial reforms in the existing education system. At the end of 1946, his project was presented to the legislature by the Minister of Government and was approved as Law 1710 with the name of the Common and Special Education Law (1946). Martiarena did not hesitate to recognize the work of José, noting that “I want to highlight the collaboration of [...] professor Shukri José, a young and intelligent man who contributed to the preparation of this project that has been so happily approved by the Honorable Legislature” (*Diario de Sesiones*, 1946, p. 363). Thus, after 50 years, the process of reorganizing the educational system of Jujuy had begun.<sup>17</sup>

In accordance with the school reform guidelines established in the First Five-Year Plan, Law 1710 increased free and obligatory education from seven to nine years: from the ages of 5 to 14. In addition, it stipulated that common education should be divided into three cycles: two years of preschool, five years of elementary education, and two years of secondary education, which included teaching a trade, art, or a manual occupation. The other new development was the introduction of the teaching of Catholicism in all schools, breaking with a long secular tradition, although it was made

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Creación de la Dirección Provincial de Sanidad de la Provincia de Jujuy, 1942). For more information, see Jerez (2016).

17 This initiative, as noted, was the heir to previous programs and proposals of Tanco Radicalism, reformulated for insertion in the new Peronista political context. Martiarena explicitly recognized this in his presentation to the legislature of the reform of the provincial education system: “This reform was included in the program of the Yrigoyenista Radical Civic Union [...] and is included in the program of the Partido Único de la Revolución Nacional” (*Diario de Sesiones*, 1946, p. 360).

clear that this was to be provided for children whose parents, guardians, or person responsible did not express opposition.

Special education was intended to provide knowledge and training in practical skills in various specialties related to the area where the school was located. This instruction could be provided by institutes in the fields of business (courses to train cashiers, secretaries, bookkeepers, or commercial accountants), agronomy (in regional schools and agricultural schools), industry (mining, ceramic, weaving, arts, and trades), and technical schools (professional schools, with day or evening courses). This wide variety of schooling was taken into account by the law when it established that both common and special education could be provided in private establishments that had the authorization of the CGE.

The law also stipulated that free education include the provision of books and school supplies to poor children. While this was framed within a set of measures that had been implemented previously (above all in the 1930s), and which took into account the economic conditions of school children (such as food or health), Law 1710 marked the first time these items were included in an education law. In addition, it also provided for the opening of kindergartens in all schools in the province,<sup>18</sup> and mandated full hygiene inspections of all classrooms and locales, as well as regular medical check-ups for all members of the education community.

In contrast to what occurred in the province of Buenos Aires, where the educational reform did not mention administrative management, Law 1710 did take this into account. Nevertheless, it was clear that despite the abovementioned innovations, certain educational structures were to be retained, including the CGE. This institution continued to be made up of a president and three members, but their appointment now required previous agreement of the legislature. In addition, while the presidency had an “honorific” character up until then, after the reform it became a paid position, even though the other members of the CGE served *ad honorem*.

The members of the CGE served for three years and could be chosen to serve again. A teacher’s degree was not required to serve as president, but at least one of the three other members had to have a certificate as a professor or teacher in a national normal school, with at least four years teaching experience. A vice president was elected annually from among the members, who would stand in for the president if he was absent or unable to act.

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18 In contrast to other provinces where education had already been intensely promoted since the middle of the previous decade, such as Córdoba, for example (Ortiz Bergia, 2009).

While the basic structure of the CGE was kept, its mandate was expanded so that it could function more efficiently. Among other things, this mandate included: to direct and control common and special education in all schools in accordance with the current law; prepare projects to improve teaching in these schools; establish regulations for their internal operations; prepare syllabi; do the accounting of the school administrations; create schools; organize school vacation camps; arrange the inspection of educational institutions; and grant authorization for the establishment of private institutes.

The powers of the CGE's president were also broad, and included: to preside over sessions with a vote in case of a tie; sign and execute resolutions approved by the Council; close public and private establishments that did not meet educational or hygienic requirements; prepare the budget for the administration of schools; submit documented accounting to the appropriate provincial and national authorities regarding the use of public funds; and chair the Teachers Evaluation Panel (Junta Calificadora del Magisterio, JCM).

The latter institution was another important innovation created by the new law. Its purpose was to regulate the work of teachers, establishing a hierarchy and providing labor stability. The JCM recorded teachers' seniority, annual evaluations, academic degree, and academic publications, in addition to the school where they taught. The number of points achieved by adding up these factors made it possible to assess teachers for promotions and transfers, according to seniority and the location of the school (if the teacher taught in a school outside the province), which resulted in salaries increasing considerably.<sup>19</sup>

In order to deal with one very important factor that contributed to illiteracy, dropping out of school, government monitoring and control was initiated to eliminate child labor. This task was delegated to the so-called School Councils (Consejos Escolares) which were established in the departments in the interior of the province. The goal was to contribute to "achieving the highest regular school attendance by students" (*Diario de sesiones*, 1946, p. 41). It was clear that although there had long been a national law that prohibited school-age children from working (Law 11317, Ley de Trabajo de las Mujeres y los Niños, 1924), it was frequently violated in the province – as in other parts of the country – especially on large private properties such as the sugarcane mills.

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19 Thus, given that the average basic salary of a teacher in 1946 was close to 150 pesos, with the implementation of the new norms and only taking into account five years of seniority, this salary was increased by approximately 25 pesos (*Mensaje del gobernador*, 1947).

The importance of Law 1710 (Common and Special Education Law, 1948) is reflected in its implications in both the spheres of education and politics. In 1947, Tomás del Campo resigned as president of the CGE in order to become a provincial legislator. Shukri José was named his successor together with three new members, including engineer Luis Piola and professor Carlos Ibarra. Undoubtedly, Martiarena found José more to his taste than his predecessor. This was perhaps because both were young leaders with similar objectives. In this vein, in his inaugural speech, the new CGE president acknowledged that illiteracy was the foremost problem in the province (*Diario Jujuy*, 1948).

Various measures were taken to tackle this problem. One of them was the initiation of large-scale adult education programs. More than 72 courses designed especially to provide basic instruction to adults were offered in provincial and national schools<sup>20</sup> throughout the entire province, with the exception of the departments of Susques and Valle Grande.<sup>21</sup> In 1950, more than 1,200 adults with little or no basic education attended these courses, and almost 90 teachers participated.

Another important measure was the approval of a norm that benefited teachers working in remote rural areas, especially in the canyon and the puna. In order to help optimize teachers' performance in these areas, José prepared a draft law, later approved as Law 1885 (Houses for Rural Teachers Law [*Ley de Casas para Maestros Rurales*], 1948), which required the government to provide housing for all its teachers in rural schools (*Revista 4 Años de Gobierno*, 1950). In addition, and following national guidelines, the CGE promoted technical education. One example was the creation of the province's Industrial School for Ceramics (*Escuela Industrial de Cerámica*) for the training of technical, industrial, and artistic personnel.<sup>22</sup>

The Eva Perón Foundation also played an important role through the creation of boarding schools and the distribution of material resources, such as school supplies and aprons, to poorer families. The presence of this national institution was firmly established when the First Lady visited Jujuy at the beginning of 1950 to inaugurate the Hogar Escuela Domingo Mer-

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20 This curriculum included instruction in reading, writing, basic arithmetic, and history and civic education.

21 Given the considerable economic needs of the province and the difficulty accessing these localities during the first years of Peronism, it can be inferred that the lack of adequate roads was the main obstacle to implementing government educational policies in these departments.

22 This school was established in order to train students (youths, workers or artisans) to work in factories or set up their own workshops. All the raw materials used came from the province itself, including, for example, clay, quartz, and feldspar (*Revista 4 de Junio*, 1949).

cante in the provincial capital.<sup>23</sup> All of these works, which were coordinated directly between the Foundation and the local government, contributed significantly to education in the province.

The CGE also oversaw the construction of many school buildings, primarily in places far from the main urban centers. This work was meritorious: in 1952, the province had 175 schools, almost double the number that existed in 1940. During these same years, the number of teachers grew by practically the same proportion. The impact of these initiatives was quickly felt by beneficiaries. In four years (1946-1950), the number of students increased by more than 50%.

The Peronist government's considerable investment in education contributed to these achievements. From 1946 to 1951, the amounts that the provincial government allocated to education were among the largest in its budget, greatly exceeding that destined for other sensitive areas such as health and housing.<sup>24</sup> Taken together, these measures had a significant impact on the struggle against illiteracy, which decreased considerably in the following years. Thus, non-Peronist sources reveal that the rate of illiteracy in Jujuy declined by more between 1947 and 1960 (13 years) than between 1914 and 1960 (46 years). The illiteracy rate fell from 35% in 1947 to 21% in 1960 (*Analfabetismo en la Argentina*, 1963).<sup>25</sup>

On the regional level, while the differences in rates of illiteracy between Argentina's northeastern provinces and those on the coast did not disappear altogether, the policies implemented significantly reduced them.<sup>26</sup> For a province like Jujuy, which belonged to a region with illiteracy rates, school dropout levels, and material and technical resources that were very different from the richer regions of the country, these were undoubtedly significant

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23 Eva Perón also came to Jujuy to inspect other works, such as the clinic for infant recovery in Termas de Reyes, and in order to plan the construction of the Policlínico Presidente Perón in the capital.

24 During this period, the resources provided for education were approximately 12,000,000 pesos, followed by those for health: 4,500,000 pesos, and those for housing: around 2,000,000 pesos. These sums were only exceeded by those assigned to public works in general (construction and remodeling of public buildings, provision of running water and sewers, among other works carried out in different parts of the province), with a budget of 18,000,000 (*Memoria Dirección Arquitectura*, 1952).

25 The number of adult students registered in 1958 had grown by almost 300% in comparison to 1947.

26 One example of this can be found in the provinces of Salta and Jujuy where, in 1947, 30% and 35% of their population, respectively, was illiterate; and the coast, where in provinces such as Santa Fe and Córdoba, the illiteracy rate was 13%. However, in 1962, the latter had rates of about 9% and 12% while the two northeastern provinces had rates of 18% and 20%. The disparity also declined in relation to the province of Mendoza, in the region of Cuyo, which had an illiteracy rate of about 17% in 1947 and 13% in 1962 (*Analfabetismo en la Argentina*, 1963).

improvements. At the same time, they reveal the dissimilar objectives and results achieved by Peronist educational policies throughout the nation.

On the other hand, though Jujuy initiated a series of administrative centralization reforms and policies in the field of education at an early stage, following the approval of Law 1710, this process intensified with the creation of the national Ministry of Education in 1949. The CGE continued reorganizing and creating various dependencies such as the departments of Physical Education and Social Assistance of the Teacher. These initiatives tended to optimize the work of this high-level provincial educational body, “in concordance with the social and political principles that support the plan of government of the Nation” (*Revista 4 de Junio*, 1949, p. 36).

Nevertheless, despite these improvements, Shukri José’s work was not free from obstacles and tensions, especially in the political sphere. Thus, in spite of the importance of the educational reorganization implemented, a ministry of education was not created during his term in office, unlike the case in Buenos Aires. Consequently, his work continued to be subordinate to the Ministry of Government, headed by Martiarena. In 1950, at the end of the first administration of Iturbe, this young lawyer left this office and ceased all public activities.<sup>27</sup>

This estrangement perhaps reveals that there were discrepancies within the governing sector. No doubt this affected the president of the CGE, who continued in his post – now under the supervision of a colleague, Jorge Villafaña, a teacher and long-time Yrigoyenist activist. While José’s working relationship with the new Minister of Government did not appear to have become conflictive, it was not as easy as the one that he had with his predecessor. Perhaps these changes in the provincial cabinet contributed to his staying only two more years as head of the CGE, and then deciding to leave public office in 1952. With this decision, an important era in the career of this teacher and, to be sure, in the history of education in Jujuy came to an end.

## Conclusions

In order to lower illiteracy rates and deal with a weak education system, the Peronist authorities in Jujuy resurrected some of the programs and proposals of the Tanco Radicals. In a context in which many voices demanded

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<sup>27</sup> This term lasted for four years, but with the reform of the provincial constitution in 1949, the term was expanded to six years. In order to standardize the terms of local officials with those of national officials, the term of the next governor, for one time only, lasted two years; that is, until 1952.

profound changes, the political space opened up by Peronism seemed to be propitious for government action in the field of education. In addition to the construction of school buildings on a massive scale, the government decided to efficiently reorganize the education system while improving teachers' working conditions and implementing various policies to improve basic education in the province.

Shukri José played a fundamental role in these changes. With the support of Minister of Government Martiarena, he led the transformation of an education system that had remained practically unchanged since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In contrast to Buenos Aires, where the educational reform was carried out virtually at the end of the term of governor Mercante, Jujuy's reform was implemented at the beginning of governor Alberto Iturbe's term in office. Moreover, José's sustained public service during this period was another distinctive feature, and his predominantly technical – rather than political – profile marked him apart from some of his peers, especially in neighboring provinces.<sup>28</sup>

Law 1710 was the first organic norm to describe and increase the functions of the CGE, in addition to reorganizing its administrative structure. On the other hand, this law also laid the basic foundations for education in the province, making substantial modifications that were intended to bring provincial policies into line with those promoted by the central government – something that is evident, for example, in the strong emphasis on technical education – and to address the precarious state of education in the area.

Following its provisions, obligatory education was increased from seven to nine years – unlike Buenos Aires, where it was increased to seven years. In addition to the increase in the number of school buildings and students, the number of teachers also grew and, for the first time, they were provided with labor stability and their promotions and transfers were regulated. Another significant measure was the creation of government bodies intended to enforce the prohibition of school-age children from working in economic enterprises that located operated in the prosperous areas of the province, such as sugarcane mills. This measure consolidated

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28 In Salta, for example, it was evident that the person responsible for education, Héctor Lavaglio, engaged in political activity that affected his technical work in government agencies, and his actions were sometimes questioned by local media. In 1948, the daily *El Intransigente* maintained that "Héctor Lovaglio, president of the General Council of Education [...] has fixed up his ñaño Dante Lovaglio as a provincial deputy and his brother, Dr. José Lovaglio in Cafayate [in] the following positions: school doctor, director of a hospital, regional doctor, mayor, and justice of the peace" (cited in Michel, 2005, p. 14).

government intervention in these traditional economic “enclaves” with the aim of ensuring that the majority of children stayed in school.

Thus, the increase in access to primary education that Peronism achieved in Jujuy tends to somewhat qualify praise for the achievements in secondary education on the national level. Irrespective of this argument, perhaps for this province, given the local and regional precedents, increased access constituted one of the most significant achievements of this period. This study recounts how this was achieved through the various proposals and projects of previous governments, resulting in policies that modified and significantly improved and expanded elementary education.

Nevertheless, despite these achievements, José had to face serious political obstacles. Despite the large amount of resources provided for the educational sphere, the CGE remained a dependency of the Ministry of Government. Just as in another important area – health – a ministry was not created to deal specifically with education, unlike the case of Buenos Aires in 1949, limiting the process of administrative centralization and, as a result, maintaining collegiate bodies. This contributed to the relationship between the two officials becoming dependent, to a large extent, not only on the work of the CGE president but also on his continuity in the position.

In this sense, José evidently felt more affinity for Martiarena than for Villafañe, which was reflected both in the momentum achieved by the policies that were undertaken by the CGE and in his later resignation after Martiarena left office. This situation illustrates the tensions that existed in the governing sector in the context of the reorganization of the education sector. The involvement of technicians such as José in managing education and reforming the education system meant that educational policies during this period were marked by a high level of rationality, over and above the indoctrination that, according to some studies, characterized the early 1950s in Argentina.<sup>29</sup>

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29 While we do not have the source that would allow us to prove this, we do not completely reject the hypothesis that these efforts to manipulate the educational system also contributed to José's leaving the governmental sphere of education. We leave this question open for further research.

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