

The Nation-State and the Origins of Secondary Education in Argentina: The Case of the *Colegio Nacional* (National School)

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Abstract

This article focuses on the origins of secondary education in Argentina. In particular, it explores the possible relations between the modelling of educational institutions intended for the formation of political elites and the fabrication of the nation-state. In Argentina, the creation of free, compulsory elementary education was preceded by the development of secondary education through the setting up of the colegio nacional. These schools were formed during the political unification of the national territory after domestic post-independence wars. Note the name given to these institutions: national schools. How did the nation and the state appear in the organization of national schools? The article explores this question analyzing school curricula and rector's reports during the configuration of the colegio nacional between 1863 and 1890.

Key words: *curricula; configuration; national; territory; secondary schools.*

Introduction

In 1884, the Argentine writer and politician Miguel Cané (1851-1905) published the book *Juvenilia*, in which he reminisced on his time as a student of the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires between 1863 and 1868. The account offers vignettes of student life in this period, including the confrontation between students from the provinces of the recently constituted nation (the provincials) and those who, like Cané, were from the “State” of Buenos Aires (Porteños), which at the time included the city and province of the same name, the most powerful in the country:

Before their entry the political passions that had shaken the Republic since 1852 were reflected in the divisions and hatred among the students. Provincials and Porteños formed two sides whose differences were often settled in fights. [...] We believed then, exaggeratedly, that all punishments were reserved for us, while the provincials (we were from the “State” of Buenos Aires) were assured of absolute impunity. (Cané, 1884/1936, pp. 102, 113)

“Provincials” and “Porteños” were thus brought together in the schoolrooms of the first *colegio nacional*, devoted to the education of the budding nation state’s future leaders. Cané was one of the writers of the so-called *Generación del 80* of Argentine literature. But he also participated actively in the State as a national and provincial deputy, a diplomat to Colombia, Venezuela and Paris, mayor of the City of Buenos Aires, and Minister of Foreign Relations and of the Interior. In 1898, as a senator, he introduced the Residency Law (Law 4,144 of 1902) which authorized the Executive Branch to prevent the entry of and to expel foreigners whose behaviour compromised national security or disturbed public order.

In the same era, a young schoolboy from the northern province of Salta headed to Buenos Aires to study at the *colegio nacional*. Toribio Tedín (circa 1850-1866), grandson of Macacha Güemes, one of the most important women in Argentine independence, and son of Dr. Pío José Tedín, a former student of the Colegio de Ciencias Morales, the predecessor to the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires, studied there between 1863 and 1866. In the letters to his family he writes:

As you may see yesterday’s La Nación [newspaper] and you may be alarmed by the article about the Colegio, I’m going to tell you something about this, it’s false what it says that there are two Clubs whose mottoes are FIGHT TO THE DEATH AGAINST THE PORTEÑOS, FIGHT TO THE DEATH AGAINST THE PROVINCIALS, it is true though that the few Porteños are friends with each other, and the same with the provincials, but some are friends with the others too without there being rivalry between the two groups. (Tedín, 1864, in Bravo Tedín, 2011, pp. 54-55)

For Tedín, the confrontation between provincials and Porteños was not as important as for Cané, although the groupings were evidence of this tension: Tedín shared his room with the other students from Salta in the school. In 1866, Juan María Gutiérrez, then chancellor of the Universidad de Buenos Aires and a close friend of Tedín’s father, wrote to the family to inform them of the student’s tragic death while swimming in the river with some classmates.

Although Cané and Tedín’s lives had different outcomes, they shared aspects related to the conceptual aim of this article: the relationship between the creation of the *colegios nacionales* and the formation of the Argentine nation-state. Undoubtedly, the Argentine education history has already revealed the role of the elementary level schooling and the teacher training schools (*escuelas normales*) in the development of the national identity (Puiggrós, 1990), especially since the 100th anniversary of

the May Revolution that took place in 1810 (De Miguel et al, 2015; Finocchio, 2016; Marengo, 1991; Mariño, 2014; Rodríguez Aguilar & Ruffo, 2014; Spalding, 1972), as well as in the development of the Republic's citizens (Lionetti, 2007; Dussel, 2011).

As to secondary education, preceding studies argued over the political function of the *colegios nacionales* due to their orientation towards the education of future ruling classes and, consequently, the organizers of the State (Acosta, 2011; Dussel, 1997; Legarralde, 1998; Tedesco, 1986). However, there are few studies that look at the connection between the *colegios nacionales* and the national question before the twentieth century. Existing studies generally do so from a curricular perspective (Aguilar de Zapiola, 2007; Quintero Palacios, 1995). This latter article analyzes how the invention of the *colegios nacionales* was related to the invention of the nation states during the second half of the 19th century.

Bringing together these two objects of study – *colegios nacionales* and nation-state – requires some clarifications. Firstly, with regards to the *colegios nacionales*, in Argentina the creation of free and compulsory elementary education was preceded by the development of secondary schools. These schools, in the figure of the *colegio nacional*, were the institutions responsible for the education of the ruling classes and were university-oriented. Indeed, both Cané and Tedín belonged to the enlightened elites of their respective provinces and did their pre-university studies at the republic's first *colegio nacional* in 1863. In their own ways, Cané and Tedín both reflected on the political conflict that persisted between Buenos Aires and the provinces despite national unification in 1861, which ran through the development of the future ruling class.

Secondly, note that this article sets out from the concept of nation-state. Sabato (2012) highlights the period between 1852 and 1890 when she historicizes the process of construction of the nation-state. Over thirty years of conflict passed between one moment and the other, which traditional historiography has identified as the years of national organization (Halperín Donghi, 1995). Two moments stand out in the territorial political organization: the Argentine Confederation between 1852 and 1862, which instituted Argentina as a federal republic with the province of Buenos Aires divided from the rest of the provinces, and the Argentine Republic unified from 1862 onwards under the hegemony of Buenos Aires and the first government with national jurisdiction. The Argentine case constitutes an example of joint construction, or even of the construction of the State before the nation: "And in 1880 that period of creation of a new reality can be considered closed, not because it is clear to everyone that the new nation has been built [...] but because the establishment of that national State that was supposed to be pre-existing has culminated" (Halperín Donghi, 1995, p. 9).

Tröhler (2020) offers a fertile conceptual framework to articulate the two objects proposed here. On the one hand, he picks up on the necessary differentiation between the concepts of nation, state and nation-state: nation as a cultural thesis of belonging and identity and the state as an apparatus of power, participation and administration.

Of interest to Argentina is his idea of the nation-state as a *constitutionally rooted constellation* in which both the dominant vision of the nation and the stability of the state benefit each other mutually. The enactment of the first constitution in 1853 and necessary formation of the state referred to above show this. Furthermore, the idea of stability, which in Argentina probably translated into the demand for “order”, accompanied the consolidation of the nation-state from 1880 (Sabato, 2012).

Tröhler also offers a dynamic perspective in differentiating not only concepts but also processes located in precise historical times: there is education and nation-building, and education and state-building before the French Revolution, but only education and nation-state-building after it. He then adds that, aside from the differences in times and places, in all the cases we can appreciate the instrumentalization of state structures that promote a particular ideal of the nation. In terms of education the state organizes rituals and schooling which form the culturally desired national-minded citizens.

With this in mind, I argue that the creation and expansion of the *colegios nacionales* was a constitutive part of the process of formation and consolidation of the nation-state. This process occurred on the basis of a parallel development between the forms of institutional and curricular regulation and organization of the *colegios nacionales* and the changes in the content of the ideas of state and nation over the course of the 19th century. Apart from the increasing global visibility of public education as a state's tool at that time (Green, 1990; Meyer & Ramirez, 2002), it should be noticed how a specific school organization, as part of an institutional legacy from an idiosyncratic culture, behaved between the tensions of modernization, citizenship, state building and increasing nationalism.

As noted by Tröhler and Lenz (2015), inside the real organization of educational systems there are rules and practices that represent traditions, in the sense of inherited cultural models of order and systems of reasoning; these systems guarantee cultural continuities which allow new laws or programmes to be implemented successfully. This implies a look into the process of hybridization between pre-existing secondary schools, on the one hand, and new norms designed to regulate national secondary schools enacted from the national State, on the other.

The first part of this article presents the period of pre-configuration of the *colegios nacionales* in relation to the first form of republican government between 1852 and 1861; and the second part develops the moment of configuration of the *colegio nacional* in 1863, in the context of the first presidencies that governed the national territory as a whole. The article focuses on these matters through the analysis of school curricula and rectors' reports between 1863 and 1890. The conclusions reflect on the need to broaden studies in this perspective. As Anderson states: “Educational historians are familiar with the idea that popular education created citizens for the new nation-state, by ‘making Italians’ or turning peasants into Frenchmen [*sic*] [...] Perhaps we have been less aware of the role of secondary education in the same process” (2004, p. 106).

Pre-national schools amidst the formation of the nation-state

Argentina was formed as a republic with a representative and federal system of government in 1853, the year that its constitution was enacted. Until 1810, the territory that currently makes up the Argentine republic was part of the Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata under the rule of the Spanish Empire. After independence in 1816, a series of domestic struggles ensued, including a significant conflict between proponents of a federalist organization and those that supported a centralization of power in the City and Province of Buenos Aires, the most powerful state.

Two characteristics stand out in the period between the end of the wars of independence and the formation of the nation-state. The first is tied to the idea of nation. As Chiaramonte writes (1997), before 1810 Ibero-American elites ignored the concept of nationality and used nation and State interchangeably. This was also the case of the elites from Río de la Plata. Chiaramonte writes that in this period, to construct a nation was to organize a State through a process of political negotiations to conciliate parties' interests according to *jus gentium*. The cities and provinces as political fragments of the former viceroyalty declared themselves free, sovereign, independent states and signed agreements of association. The alternative from 1831 was a union of states: a confederation (Piqueras, 2016).

The Argentine Confederation was a pact among the provinces, a confederation of sovereign states that delegated their foreign representation and certain other governmental powers to one of the states, Buenos Aires. In 1835, in response to conflicts among the provinces, Buenos Aires Governor Juan Manuel de Rosas (1793-1877) took charge of the confederation with full public power until 1852. This was not a question of an absence of nation, simply because there was no "national" stage to aspire to – almost no space for the national imagined community as in Anderson (1990).

The second characteristic refers to republicanism, an element that was constituted as a desirable stage for enlightened thought in the Río de la Plata even before independence. As Sabato maintains (2006), throughout Latin America, with the exception of Brazil, the republican option entailed a decisive change in the basics of political power. The principle of popular sovereignty was imposed over that of monarchic authority. And to do so it was necessary to institute a political community formed by citizens, which would give power to its legitimacy. Naturally the option of republican forms of government implied an idea of nation: "the liberal notion of the nation as an abstract entity of sole and indivisible sovereignty integrated by free and equal individuals – the citizens – circulated from early on [...]; popular sovereignty, representation and nation were connected concepts that also referred to closely related realities" (Sabato, 2009, p. 25).

Thus, Dussel (2011) notes, in the case of Argentina, republican ideas and projects played a significant role in the organization of the nation. However, as highlighted in the introduction, this was not possible until the creation of the nation-state form. Both

Chiaromonte (1997) and Sabato (2012) agree that its construction only began in 1852. At that moment, the territory and political structure consisted of a confederation of fourteen provinces. The defeat of Rosas in 1852 allowed the beginning of a process of institutionalization in the country, which retained the name of the Argentine Confederation. The Argentine Constitution was enacted in 1853 and a government and executive branch were formed. This led to the secession of the State of Buenos Aires, which entered into a war with the rest of the Confederation that lasted until 1861. During this period, the first constitutional president of the Confederation was Justo José de Urquiza, a native of Entre Ríos, an eastern province in the Confederation, who was defeated by the centralist forces of Bartolomé Mitre in 1861.

During the Argentine Confederation, several schooling experiences lay the foundations for the future *colegios nacionales*. This was a period of pre-configuration in which it is possible to highlight at least two major trends. On the one hand, it is interesting to note the importance of the private sector in the creation of institutional alternatives and the participation of Europeans in this process. As indicated above, by this time Argentina was independent of Spain and embroiled in post-revolution infighting. The education options, nevertheless, were not only promoted by Spanish residents but to a large extent, English and French ones as well. For example, of the 47 institutions studied by Newland (1992) in Buenos Aires between 1852 and 1860, fourteen were of English and ten of French origin. The names of such institutions also express the vicissitudes of the political territorial organization of the nascent nation-state: Colegio Republicano Federal (Federal Republican School), the Colegio Federal Patriótico de La Merced (Patriotic Federal School of La Merced) or the Colegio Argentino de San Martín (Argentine School of San Martín; Ramallo, 1999).

At the same time, of note was the creation of two schools which, for the first time in the history of the provinces of the Río de la Plata, were created by the state and not by religious orders: the Colegio del Uruguay, in the province of Entre Ríos, and the Colegio de San Miguel, in the province of Tucumán.

Founded by Justo José de Urquiza in 1849, the Colegio del Uruguay was a free boarding school of preparatory studies for up to 500 students, including Julio Argentino Roca (1843-1914), twice president of the republic (1880-1886 and 1898-1904). The Frenchman Albert Larroque was the rector of the Colegio del Uruguay from 1854 to 1863 (Sagarna, 1947). Larroque also founded the Colegio Republicano-Federal in 1849, followed by the Colegio del Plata in Buenos Aires. Later, in 1854, he took his ideas to the Colegio del Uruguay at the behest of Urquiza himself and consolidated his experiences as a member of the National Commission for the Planning of General and University Education in 1865.

The federalization of the province of Entre Ríos during Urquiza's term as the constitutional president of the Argentine Confederation (1854-60) placed the school within the sphere of the national government. This was, in fact, the first national, or rather federal, school. The other nationalized school under the Confederation was the former provincial Jesuitic preparatory school in Córdoba, the Colegio Montserrat.

In the context of this federalization, Larroque made several modifications as soon as he was appointed, beginning what would become known as the school's golden age (Bosch, 1949).

A look at the curricula that Larroque developed at the Colegio del Uruguay does not lead us to suppose, at that time, a concern for the national question. Between 1854 and 1857, Larroque introduced four different curricula without any mention of any form of national curriculum, save for the case of commercial studies in the proposal of 1855 which included National Language. By 1863 the Colegio del Uruguay was in a weakened situation. Although the school had been nationalized during the Confederation, after Urquiza's defeat in 1861 it returned to depending on provincial funding, requiring bailouts from the national coffers from then on.

The Colegio de San Miguel in the northern province of Tucumán was created in 1854 on the bases of an old religious school. Between 1858 and 1862 it was directed by Amadée Jacques, a French exile, former professor at the École Normale Supérieure. Jacques was later appointed to the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires, where he drafted his recommendations for the same national commission where Larroque was a member in 1865. Both experiences thus converged in a report that served as the basis for later discussion on the orientation of the future *colegios nacionales*.

Like Larroque's, Jacques's experience in Tucumán was a success as noted by the Prussian naturalist Hermann Burmeister when he was part of the examining committee for the final exams: "[The school] would rank as a first-class Prussian gymnasium, though it should be noted that Prussian instruction is more based on classical languages while the Colegio de Tucumán is based on what we refer to as the 'exact' sciences'" (Fierro, 1914 cited in Cerviño, 1964, p. 20). However, Jacques's curricula proposals did advance in the incorporation of content that referred explicitly to the idea of the nation: he included, in 1858, National Language and Argentine constitutional law. Later on, at the colegio nacional de Buenos Aires, in 1863, he introduced Argentine history and geography (Cerviño, 1964; Jacques, 1945).

In short, during the Argentine Confederation there were experiences that preceded the creation of the *colegios nacionales*, albeit scattered among the provinces and, in many cases, with little sustainability over time. Through them circulated the practical experiences and knowledge of foreigners who then settled in the territory of the republic. The federal republican form, typical of the Confederation, seemed to prevail even in the names some institutions had. In the following pages, the creation of the *colegios nacionales* in 1863 will show the overlap between the advance of the nation-state and forms of schooling that were constituted in parallel and sustained it.

National schools amidst the consolidation of the nation-state

In 1861 all territories became part of the Argentine Republic under the political and economic leadership of Buenos Aires. Three successive constitutional presidencies

between 1862 and 1880 laid the bases for political, economic and social organization, although there was ongoing political instability and conflict between the provinces and the central government. This posed a challenge for the country's leaders, who considered that progress depended on "order", leading to a new stage in the construction of the nation in the form of a conservative republic (Halperin Donghi, 1995; Puiggrós, 2002).

The problem of order was undoubtedly related to the growing complexity of a society in which urbanization, immigration and labour organization all grew rapidly (Terán, 2008). The Argentine population doubled between 1869 and 1895 and went from four to eight million by 1914 (Spalding, 1972). According to the second national census of 1895, over 25% were foreigners, and in cities like Buenos Aires foreigners accounted for up to 42% of the population (Sabato, 2012). Thus, the task of promoting national identity for the creation of patriotic traditions and symbols began timidly from 1870 and grew more intense around the turn of the century promoting a "cultural nationalism" (Terán, 2008; Delaney, 2002).

The *colegios nacionales* were created in this period. This was not the first attempt: in 1856, President Urquiza decreed the creation in the Argentine Confederation of national schools in four provinces. A year later, this plan was dropped due to a lack of funds. In 1863, on the bases of the former Colegio de Ciencias Morales, later the Colegio Eclesiástico, President Mitre created the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires, an establishment for preparatory scientific education where students would study letters, humanities, moral sciences, physics and mathematics. As explained above, this institution inherited the experiences of previous schools. How did the *colegios nacionales* articulate with the formation of the nation-state? The following pages will offer two possible ways to construe the facts.

Modelling state systemization: Dynamics of the nation-state

As noted by Quintero Palacios (1995), it is significant that one of the first concerns of the sector that came into power of a territorially unified state after 1861 focused precisely on the centralization and standardization of the Urquiza government's attempts at secondary education. From the point of view of schooling, this political priority tied to the new nation-state's need for legitimization ushered in a logic of modelling state systematization: from the central government in Buenos Aires to the provinces, from an institutional reference model to pre-existing or newly-created institutions. Indeed, Decree 5447 for the creation of the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires inaugurated not only an educational establishment but even more so an institutional model that would become the model for *colegios nacionales* for the next thirty years (Legarralde, 1998).

A first landmark of modelling state systematization can be found in the creation of *colegios nacionales* in the provinces from 1864. The second article of the decrees creating these schools established that: "schooling shall last five years and shall follow the curriculum used in the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires, which shall be used as the basis, as well as its regulations for internal rules, establishing in addition a special

class in mineralogy” (García Merou, 1900, p. 130). The rest of the articles, regarding organization, the validity of the certificate to access national universities and schools’ entry requirements remained the same as in the original decree for the creation of the colegio de Buenos Aires.

The existence of these decrees does not imply a *vis-à-vis* standardization between the original model in Buenos Aires and the rest of the *colegios nacionales* created. There were notable difficulties in their implementation: the lack of budget and scarce resources, from buildings to libraries, were the main justifications in demands that the five-year curriculum established in the decree be modified (Ministerio de Justicia e Instrucción Pública, 1903).

However, the national government did not permit any divergence from regulation plans. Instead, it mandated a curricular unity as a way of organizing and regulating the recently created network of *colegios nacionales* as a representative form of secondary education. That is, the national government organized the nascent system according to an institutional model with ideas that were the product of a hybridization of pre-existing practices, foreign ideas and educators, and institutional inventions led by the government itself.

The debate regarding a homogenous curriculum also appeared in rectors’ reports in the late 19th century. The rector of the Colegio Nacional de Paraná stated:

[...] given the great size of our country, resulting in its diverse latitudes, making up the three zones, its different geological constitutions, its distinct regions, differences of soil and production, where there arise the various applications of its products, industries and diverse inclinations to labour in its inhabitants; if these positive physical conditions are available in the Republic, is it right to have a uniform curriculum to apply in such varied regions and which prepares students almost exclusively for these two professions, law and medicine, especially the former, which has now become almost a governing, privileged guild, affecting directly the country’s true democratic interests? (Soler, 1892, p. 355)

During this same period the *escuelas normales* (teacher training high schools), were created, which opened a path parallel to the formation of *colegios nacionales*, albeit with a different purpose, as they were intended for training teachers. Although they increased significantly between 1870 and 1890 as primary education grew, by 1916 the *colegios nacionales* had more students than the *escuelas normales*, and by 1930 the number of *colegios nacionales* – 149 – exceeded that of the former – 130 (Acosta, 2011).

A second milestone in the convergence of the institutional model of the *colegio nacional* was its consolidation as a model for private schools. From the fall of the government of Juan Manuel de Rosas in 1852 until 1878, students at private schools sat their exams directly at the university. In 1878, private students acquired the right to take the exams at *colegios nacionales*. To do so, the private school had to be incorporated into the *colegio nacional*. In 1886, the regulatory decree of the freedom of education

law established that it was necessary to specify the years of study to be taught at the private school according to the curriculum in place at the *colegio nacional* (García Merou, 1900).

It is interesting here to consider the role of these regulations in the consolidation of the *colegio nacional* as a model. Following Burke's notion of model (2007), the *colegio nacional* possessed the highest number of attributes because it was the original school: if each private school had to follow the curriculum and students had to sit exams at the *colegios nacionales*, it shared one of the essential attributes and bore a great family resemblance. Furthermore, this demand on private schools consolidated the *colegio nacional* not only as a model for others but also as its own model. Thus, the schools' nationalization was articulated with *a state way of operating*, i.e. centralization, which would serve to both legitimize the new authority and guarantee its reproduction through the formation of the governing body and administration, as argued in the following paragraph.

The generalist cultural curriculum: The production and reproduction of the elites/agents

As Dussel writes (1997), the curriculum of the *colegio nacional* constituted a cultural hierarchy based on the study of literature, humanities and foreign languages, forming a humanist curriculum with an encyclopaedist base. As mentioned in the previous section, this curriculum was consolidated by Amadeo Jacques through his role in both the inaugural school and in the national commission tasked with drawing up a project for a general and university teaching plan for the Argentine republic.

However, between 1863 and 1916, there were seventeen different curricula. In the long term, the balance between literary, scientific and practical (work, gymnastics, music) disciplines remained stable: the first group, literature, accounted for over 50% of the school timetable in all cases, with the exception of two curricula (Dussel, 1997). The sequence of proposals for change in the curricula not only indicates the prevalence of the humanist-culturalist curriculum but also the trend towards a generalist cultural education (Acosta, 2020).

Following Quintero Palacios (1995), it could be said that generalist cultural education, removed from practical applications, went hand in hand with the need – as defined by the liberal nationalist project of *Mitrisimo* – to co-opt and reproduce a ruling elite that should adopt for itself the idea of an Argentine Nation symbolized in its territory and politically represented by the governing sector. Not only should this ruling elite take this on but also it should be in a position to administer it.

The tensions over the content and purposes of education can also be analyzed through the changes in the names of the subjects of the different curricula in the *colegios nacionales*. These show the tension between a general academic education, typical of the origins of humanist-based secondary education (Acosta, 2011), and its localization in a specific nation-state.

In this regard, in 1882, the rector of the Colegio Nacional de la Rioja warned about the serious teaching of the Castilian Spanish language in comparison with the national language:

Castilian Spanish is studied here seriously, and the principles of beauty established last year by the true nature of the beautiful language of Castile are widespread in this School. In La Rioja, as in Santiago, a Spanish slang is spoken among the people, plagued with Quechua terms, and it is therefore vital to pay the greatest heed to the teaching of the national language. As for the other modern languages taught in our schools, that is, French and English, there is an imperious need to make their teaching more practical. (García Aguilera, p. 155)

Similarly, the rector of the Colegio Nacional del Uruguay, Onésimo Leguizamón, wrote in 1881 about the teaching of history:

Study would undoubtedly be more accessible to these tender intelligences, as would to a large degree the history of the homeland, which aside from the ease provided by familiar heroes, has the geographic knowledge of the theatre of the events to help them. (p. 249)

An exclusive identification of the national language, without indigenous components, and a history of the homeland from the first year of school appeared to be the basis of the individual to be promoted. The following table systematizes those subjects identified in the literature as particularly related to the promotion of national identity.

Quintero Palacios (1995) writes that the early institutionalization of geography was connected to the political aims of nationalization. For her, knowledge of national geography, which was also developed through knowledge of world geography, was no more than a form of self-knowledge for the national ruling class. Geography's place next to national history would be especially justified by the need to find effective arguments of collective identification among the different dominant groups active within the territorial limits of the nominal Argentina, with the supralocal and centralist properties, interests and destinies of the National State under construction.

The case of history is less evident. Aguiar Zapiola (2007) states that academic tradition and faith in progress limited its incorporation into a level of studies that prioritized education in exact and applied sciences and languages, and in the context of which a culturalist and Europeanizing history corresponded to the traditional disciplinary aim of the education of elites. Only gradually, as the official history was consolidated, did national history's relative importance increase in the curricula of the *colegios nacionales*. This situation was clearly expressed by the rector of the Colegio Nacional Oeste de la Capital at the start of the 20th century:

To impress an eminently national character on teaching is, undoubtedly, to fulfil the primary duty of the school that the State funds [...]. The National Government understood this when it passed the very wise decree on 17 February 1899, establishing that one may not teach Argentine geography and history, the national language or

civic education if one is not an Argentine citizen; this was a highly far-sighted measure that got rid of the irritating anomaly of teachers from France, Spain, England... responsible for teaching these subjects that are the cornerstone of the education of the national soul [...] (Beltran, 1900, p. 35)

Table 1

Subjects related to the formation of national identity according to the curricula of colegios

Subjects	Curricula																
	1863	1867	1870	1874	1876	1879	1884	1888	1891	1893	1900	1901	1902	1903	1905	1908	1912
Spanish	x	x	x	x	x	x	x							x	x	x	x
Geography	x			x	x	x		x			x	x	x				
Argentine Geography								x			x			x	x	x	x
Argentine and Religious Geography and History		x															
National Geography							x										
History			x								x		x				
History of the Americas particularly Argentina up to the Revolution								x									
Argentine History								x	x		x		x	x		x	x
Contemporary and National History																	
History of the Americas and Argentina up to 1810							x	x		x							
National History			x	x	x	x	x										
Argentine History and Constitution		x															
Argentine History and Geography										x					x		
History and Geography of the Americas and the Republic	x					x											
Spanish Language									x	x			x				
National Language								x			x	x					
Civic Education			x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Moral and Civic Education																	x

Note: Original table based on official documents. *nacionales* (1863-1912)

In short, during the first presidencies covering the whole Argentine territory, the nation-state expanded and was consolidated, particularly in its organizational dimension. The creation of national schools, based on institutional experiences in colonial times and the Confederation, intertwined with this process, firstly through the modelling state systematization with an emphasis on centralized regulation, and then through the growing presence of the “national” question in the subjects taught. The number of curricula and changes in the names of the subjects taught are evidence of the process of institutional experimentation, but also show the change in the construction of identity between the republican Confederation and the Argentine Republic, i.e. during the formation of the nation-state.

Conclusions

This article set out to explore the relationship between the creation of the *colegios nacionales* and the formation of the Argentine nation-state, particularly how the modelling of these schools went hand in hand with the fabrication of the nation-state during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Throughout the piece, I have tried to show the interconnection between institutional organization processes, such as the setting up of schools, and the changes in ideas about the nation and the state in the former territory of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata. The article focused on the period between 1852 and 1890, which the historians cited identify as the moment of the construction of the nation-state, when Argentina went from an association of autonomous states to one centralized nation. The constant between the two was the form of the republic and its principles and implications, chiefly the creation of future citizens.

Moreover, as mentioned in the introduction, the concern was to focus both on the instrumental character and the productive capacity of the institutions of the educational systems during the formation of the nation-state. The aim was to avoid an epiphenomenalist-type analysis in which such systems are seen as effects of variable structures to better understand the cultural models underlying the practices of educational institutionalization, models which, in turn, enable changes or inventions, such as the national schools.

The article was organized over two different scenarios: that of the Argentine Confederation and the “pre-existing” schools, and that of the unified republic and the creation and expansion of the *colegio nacional*. Changes and continuities were detected as well as cleavages which functioned as nexuses between the two scenarios.

The scenario of the Confederation showed an intense but scattered institutional production. Schools founded by religious orders, such as the Jesuits, present since the 17th century, schools created by foreign educators and, particularly, schools developed by the provincial states, such as the case of the Colegio del Uruguay, in the province of Entre Ríos, and that of San Miguel, in Tucumán. The importance of foreigners was highlighted, such as the French educators Larroque and Jacques. In this case, the content of the curricula still included more orientations particular to their directors, more concerned with the debate between humanist and scientific education than the growing need to orientate the education of the ruling classes towards the nation. The dominant cultural model still came from the tradition of the humanist schools, before any nation-state (Acosta, 2011).

In turn, the scenario of the unified republic with the creation of the *Mitrista* national school evidently accounted for a greater intertwining between institutional production and the expansion of the organizational and administrative arm of the state. Thus, national schools created from 1863, at least one in each province, were developed on a logic of a modelling state systematization, in which the inaugural school, that in Buenos

Aires, functioned as the reference. Experimentation with different curricula proposed between 1863 and 1917, reflected a gradual incorporation of national content, albeit one still in debate with the cultural-generalist model.

In terms of continuities, it is possible to highlight the orientation of these institutions towards the formation of the elites, at least up to the late 1880s. A way to safeguard this function, along with their cultural hierarchy through the curriculum, was for parts of the universities to co-opt the first *colegios nacionales* in the first decades of the 20th century. The nationalization of contents was then united with the development of patriotic-style rituals which tended to place the nation above the republic, as Dussel argues (2011). The prohibition on foreigners teaching “national” subjects was part of this. Nonetheless, the model of general culturalist education continued to be debated during the 20th century.

In this sense, it is worth underlining the connection between the educational institutions and the state in the process of joint construction of the nation-state. Indeed, the analysis indicates both: formation of the state apparatus through schooling whilst the progressive outlining of the idea of the nation. Likewise, the study shows a connection with a specific language of the modelling of secondary education, via the general culturalist orientation mentioned above. These connections will have effects during the 20th century. On the one hand, the network of national schools for the training of elites and agents of the state increased steadily until the postwar period. On the other hand, the debate between general and oriented curricula went throughout that century. Unification of first grades' curricula of *colegios nacionales* and normal schools as from 1942 and the fusion of these institutions in 1969 provides an account of this development.

In sum, at the start of the period under study in this article, Federico Tobal, a former student of the school that preceded the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires in times of the Confederation said: “[The rector] wanted us to be well in possession of the strategy needed in the federal, democratic republics, to successfully steer the ship of the State” (1896/1942, p. 18). By the time of the nation-state, the rector of the Colegio Nacional del Uruguay added: “The school is a temple where only the greatness of the homeland is worshipped, preparing its future citizens so that they may serve it with integrity, enlightenment and patriotism” (Leguizamón, 1885, p. 573).

The differences between the two discourses reflect transformations, shifts and contradictions at a time when the country was debating how to organize itself: educating to *steer the ship of the state* in the federal republic up to 1855, educating the future citizens for the greatness of the *patria* thirty years later.

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Nacionalna država i porijeklo srednjoškolskoga obrazovanja u Argentini: slučaj *Colegio nacional* (Nacionalne škole)

Sažetak

U ovom članku fokus je stavljen na porijeklo srednjoškolskoga obrazovanja u Argentini. Posebno se istražuju mogući odnosi između modeliranja obrazovnih institucija namijenjenih formiranju političkih elita i stvaranju nacionalne države. U Argentini je uspostavljanju slobodnoga, obaveznoga osnovnoškolskoga obrazovanja prethodio razvoj srednjoškolskoga obrazovanja kroz osnivanje Colegio nacional. Ove škole bile su formirane tijekom političkoga ujedinjenja nacionalnoga teritorija, nakon domaćih ratova za neovisnost. Zamijetimo ime dano tim institucijama: Nacionalne škole. Kako su se nacija i država pojavile u organizaciji nacionalnih škola? U članku se istražuje ovo pitanje analizom školskih kurikula i izvještaja rektora tijekom osnivanja Colegio nacional, u periodu između 1863. i 1890. godine.

Ključne riječi: kurikuli; nacionalno; srednje škole; strukturiranje; teritorij.