



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PRE-SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS – Project Noemí, Argentina

INTRODUCTION

This document is the executive summary of the pre-situational analysis of the Project Noemí, which focuses its actions in Argentina, for the period 2016-2020. The Project promotes educational workplace-based training systems as strategy for the development of skills in adolescents and youth from 16 to 24 years old, whether they are enrolled in schools or not.

The EWBT System (educational workplace-based training) is understood as a management model based on the articulation of different stakeholders (state, productive and social actors) in each territory, whose interventions guarantee educational inclusion and certification of the secondary level, the development of soft-skills and workplace-based training.

In this framework, the pre-situational analysis is a tool that provides information required to identify key relevant stakeholders, the potential strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that could strategically inform the project's planning. Furthermore, it provides valuable information on the state of affairs of educational workplace based practices, at regulatory and public policy levels, such as the perceptions of the main relevant stakeholders.

On the one hand, this study aims at discovering and analyzing the field consisting in policies on education, work and adolescents and youth in social vulnerability in Argentina in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Santa Fe and Tucuman. On the other hand, it aims at identifying and analyzing the perception of different stakeholders involved in this field regarding the educational workplace based practices.

The study was based on a qualitative strategy that, from a holistic approach, focused on the construction of meaning held by stakeholders (Sautu, 2003). Within this strategy,



diverse techniques were applied which allowed the relevant and updated collection of information at both levels, the representation of stakeholders and the regulations and public policies developed. The analysis comprises the initiatives related to educational workplace based practices in different parts of the country where the Project intervenes. The unit of analysis were educational centers and the communities where they are located (perceptions of different stakeholders were studied) in four cities of the provinces of Buenos Aires (municipality of La Matanza and General Pueyrredon – Mar del Plata), Tucumán y Santa Fe.

The techniques for data collection were developed based on the variety of sources of information: *secondary sources* that allowed the documental analysis of regulations and the collection of public policies at national and/or local level; and *primary sources* through deep interviews to key stakeholders in the educational system, the labor, production, trade union and corporate sectors. *Focus groups* were also carried out with Youth and social organizations.

For the **documental analysis**, many regulatory documents were collected from the agencies in charge of public policies – ministries and secretariats – that are implemented through programs, ministerial resolutions, resolutions of internal agencies within ministries and guidelines. The goal of this approach was to identify the regulatory and pragmatic levels of the field studied, analyzing its perspectives and intervention profiles in term of ensuring social protection.

For this purpose, public speeches and regulatory and legal material on social, educational and labor inclusion of adolescents and youth **were collected and systematized**. In order to carry this out, public policies and educational projects (federal, national and provincial) targeting population were identified, classified and compared. A total of 79 legal frameworks were studied, including national laws and decrees, resolutions from state agencies at national level, provincial laws and decrees, program resolutions and current bills at national level. At *national level*, 19 laws and decrees from the educational and



labor sector were identified, and 21 ministerial resolutions (program and regulatory), 20 from the *province of Buenos Aires*, 13 from *Santa Fe* and 6 from *Tucuman*. Furthermore, there is an additional analysis of a program from the City of Buenos Aires.

The **fieldwork** consisted in semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from educational and labor services available at national and local level, representatives from corporations and trade unions, small-business employers, cooperatives, companies, youth enrolled and unenrolled in schools, with experience in the carrying out practices, a model experience in the City of Buenos Aires and a significant intervention of a civil society organization in the province of Buenos Aires. Thirty-seven interviews were performed to individuals and focus groups between May and August 2017. The collection of primary data was carried out in three levels (national, provincial and local) according to the Argentine federal system.

At *national level*, some interviews were carried out to representatives of three state organizations (education and labor): to two representatives of the trade union sector (building and technicians); to two corporate organizations (big Company and small-business); and to one representative of the internship are in a big company.

In **the province of Buenos Aires**, interviews were carried out to educational and labor services available and to a social organization with experience in the profile studied, plus the specific interviews with the profile of the municipalities (local level) where the project is developed. Moreover, focus groups with teachers and youth were carried out in Gonzalez Catan and two interviews were performed to employers (cooperatives and bank) and one to an official of the municipality from the production area.

In the **province of Santa Fe**, some interviews were done to employers (4), social organizations, educational and labor services available in the province. Seven interviews and two focus groups were held in the city of Santa Fe.

In the **province of Tucuman**, seven interviews were performed at provincial level (educational services, social development. Ministry of Labor and companies, cooperatives



and/or corporate organization) and two focus groups were held in the city of San Miguel de Tucuman.

Table 1. Fieldwork sample

	INTERVIEW	FOCUS GROUP
NATIONAL LEVEL	8	-
BUENOS AIRES PROVINCE	5	6
TUCUMÁN	2	7
SANTA FE	6	2
BUENOS AIRES CITY	1	-

Source: Project Noemí

The organization of the fieldwork was carried out jointly with the project’s leadership, and they planned the interviews with stakeholders at national level, as well as with the local coordinators of the Project at provincial and local level. In order to carry this out, a protocol was implemented with the guidelines on the profiles and the necessary standards for the realization of interviews and focus groups (amount of days, diversification of profiles to interview, etc.). This protocol was adjusted to theoretical saturation, that is, the repetition of similar perceptions on the analyzed topics.

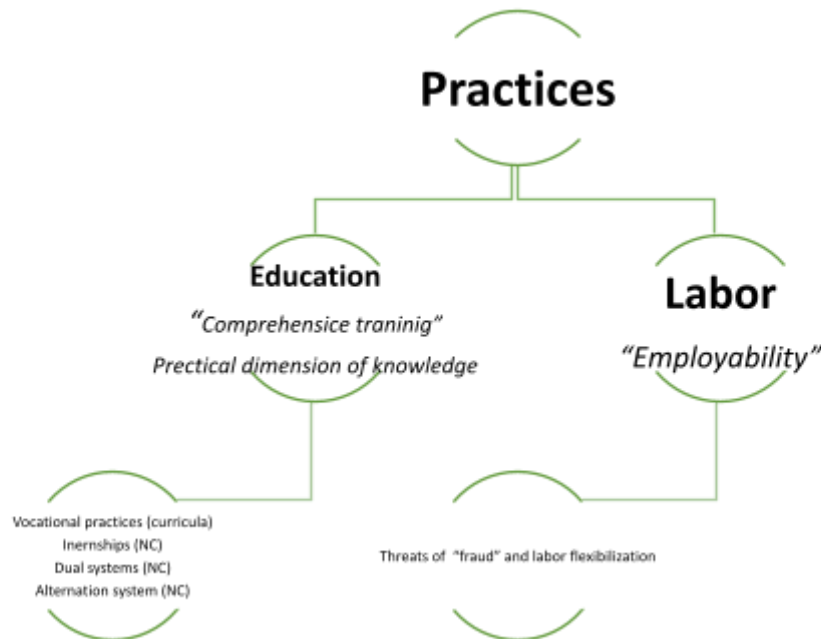
THE REALM OF EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES BASED IN THE WORKPLACE

The realm of actions taking place outside the educational institution with the aim of educating is broad and diverse. Educational workplace based practices (hereinafter “practices”) can be analyzed from two perspectives. The first approach is from the educational system and how its actions are promoted to articulate education and labor sector to materialize practical aspects in the training profiles. The second approach takes as starting point the labor system promoting practices oriented to employability, in labor



institutions involving training aspects (but where there is no link with the formal educational system) and its goal is to promote employability of recipients, particularly youth.

Graphic 1. Description of the realm of practices



Source: Project Noemí

Within the first dimension, there are two large spheres, the vocational practices in technical education involving training actions outside the educational institution; and internships, alternation systems and dual system. The latter is aligned with program interventions promoted by labor or production services at different levels, with a lower degree of institutionalization and regulation. At national level, the outstanding initiatives are the training for employment program for youth (in Spanish, *Programa de Entrenamiento para el Trabajo*), Youth with future (in Spanish, *Jóvenes con Futuro*), among others.

1. Practices within the educational system



The educational system has three types of practices as a sub-group within the practices, as their main characteristic is that they are performed by students in an organization outside the educational institution, such as a company, a social organization or a governmental institution. For such reason, a common characteristic they share is that they require to be carried out under the legal framework that justifies the presence of students outside the school and their long stay in those sites. These types of practices are: alternation systems, dual system and internships.

In this regard, the technical modality of vocational practices involves development within institutions outside the educational institution, whether it be in the trading, associative, public or social production sector. But also, such practices may be performed within the same institution through the design and implementation of a practical project. Therefore, they are classified as a dimension on its own, creating a fourth dimension of practices in the educational system. They are the result of the National Law of Technical Education (in Spanish, *Ley Nacional de Educación Técnica*) which defines them as a compulsory subject in secondary school education. Each province has regulated its implementation according to their own criteria. For example, the province of Buenos Aires has determined that this should be implemented in a minimum of 200 hours in the last year of school.

Vocational practices, identified in the normative revision and confirmed with the interviews, face a main barrier for their development: the institution that receives the trainee is unable to declare him/her as such before the supervising agency as such position (trainee) does not exist. This directly affects the benefits and protection the institution has to ensure for the trainee: a compulsory labor risk insurance (in Argentina called “ART”) and a compensation.

- *Internships* are ruled by Decree 1374/11, the current legislation for internships in secondary school at national level; they are defined as an organic extension of secondary school (...) to companies and institutions, public or private, to be performed by students as practices related to their education and training, based on



their specialization under the organization, control and supervision of the school where they belong, as indivisible part of their curriculum, for a fixed period of time (Art. 1). Internships are a common link between companies and educational institutions. It is a known modality for both parties. They are restrictive in character due to the amount of participant students and the selection criteria for them. The implementation mechanisms, such as framework agreements are not always accessible for all the potential organizations offering internships in the towns where secondary education is offered.

- The *alternation system* arises from the idea of training youth for labor and that such training should be provided not only at schools or in companies, but it should stem from the balance between both; therefore, the students spend time between the educational institution and the real labor setting, being both organizations responsible for the training process (Gallart, 1996). In Argentina, this type of practice is related to the agricultural sector and takes place family agriculture schools Escuelas de la Familia Agraria (EFA) in the province of Santa Fe and centers for total production Centros Educativos para la Producción Total (CEPT) in Buenos Aires.
- The *dual system* has existed in our country for over twenty years and consists in a program that, during the school period, combines studying at home and learning at a company, alternating the time spent in each site, that is, the study plan is divided between the two organizations. In our country, these practices start after finishing the secondary school basic cycle. It is a theoretical training in some centers of the Argentine-German industrial and trade chamber and a practical learning in a participating company. The certificate obtained is related to a technical degree valid in Germany. Currently, there a limited number of schools implementing the system.

As they take place in real labor contexts, internships, dual systems and alternations offer an interesting benefit: they offer habits and knowledge that could only be acquired in a labor context (Gallart, 2004). Moreover, they are focused on the interests and vocation of



students and the knowledge on labor they acquire is a valuable tool for the search of their first employment. Lastly, the relationship with companies promotes the participation of youth in a market segment that would otherwise be hard to enter and, consequently, this contributes to equal labor opportunities. However, the selection process to participate in such programs is usually restricted to students with the highest-grade marks.

Companies that partnership with normal or technical secondary schools also get benefits: these actions are a way to promote the development in their communities and they improve the training of quality human resources in their areas of influence. Moreover, they encourage networking with potential employees and making suggestions on the topics to be taught at school as the industry evolves. Schools are also benefited as internships enrich the work at schools, they stimulate revision and update of content and compare study plans with real labor context.

A common error is to use vocational practices as synonym of internships, ignoring the fact that they include a lot more of forms. Such is the case of training vocational practices that only refer to practices in companies and do not include any other format. Although it is not completely incorrect, as internships are a form of vocational practice, using this terminology is confusing in terms of the meaning of practices.

The most reasonable thing to do is to keep internships under an independent regulation for mainly two reasons: internships are optional while vocation practices are part of a study plan and internships are used as practice type in other secondary school modalities, not only in technical training. However, in most cases there is no clear information, or it is not easy to have access to it.

Another significant factor differentiating vocational practices from internships is that the former does not contemplate the young students in setting the basis for the agreement with the institution where the practice will be performed, only the school is involved,



while for internships there is company-school agreement and company-young student agreement, or if he/she is under 18, between company-parents/tutors.

2. Practices in the world of labor

Program interventions are a type of practices that aim at promoting the insertion of population in the labor market. They arose in the early 2000s, a moment when unemployment was a relevant topic in the public agenda. In that context, a series of interventions were developed to address the issue.

The State adopted an approach focusing on the structural conditions related to the labor market and social inequality and in the importance of formal education and the skill related to the labor world (Jacinto, 2010). From such starting point, program lines were designed with the goal of promoting the access to decent work for populations that had difficulties to achieve such access. Among them, the most relevant have been the interventions targeting Youth.

It is worth mentioning that these program lines developed their own training systems (curricula focused on skill development, for example) outside the educational system and with a critical view regarding their capacity to adjust curricula to the requirements of the labor market. These training stages, according to the program type, can take place in the same institution or outside (professional training centers from a trade union source, social organizations, etc.). Moreover, they focused on putting in contact youth, especially those in a vulnerable situation, and companies or employers under a training program with the aim of providing the necessary skills to stay in the job. At the same time, employers are benefited with tax exemption and regulatory flexibility.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The scenario in which all these practices converge is supported from the increasing extension of rights of the most vulnerable population that witnessed our country since the early 2000s. This context promoted significant advances in historical claims that make up



the core of the practice system: The Professional Technical Education Law, National Law of Education, Law to Eradicate Child Labor and Protect Adolescent Labor and Law (decree) on Internships, the new public policies on youth are a clear example of this.

However, this framework that tends to the universalization did not have a logic intervention promoting its comprehensiveness, giving place to a fragmented universe and an uncoordinated intervention. This profile was evident in the documental analysis and the reconstruction of perceptions of the different stakeholders participating in the research study.

Meanwhile, as it has been described, the field of practices cross-cuts the structural dispute between education and labor, creating tension between the right to education and the right to work. Even if Argentina has early had a universal educational system, it is criticized for its closed and school-oriented character, obstacles when it comes to interacting with the world of labor. From the field of labor, the opening towards educational logics – not merely instrumental – has been weak. In turn, both fields have had a relatively low capacity to interact and create new consensus, which has resulted in a fragmented and scattered universe (absence of a comprehensive law for the protection of youth).

In this regard, the fracture is explained by the continuation of one of the practice dimensions framed in the program of promotion of young labor by the Ministry of Labor. The reason for this continuation is the fact it is a public policy response to an issue of the labor market that affects both dimensions of it (offer and demand), as it broadly interprets the complex causes of unemployment of such population. However, to intervene on the demand of employment, it builds its own training systems in interaction with the trade union or social sectors, but leaving behind the educational system. It is worth questioning this lack of coordination and the probability that this is a response to the lack of articulation, or maybe, to the lack of reliability on the flexibility of the educational system to develop a curriculum that suits the requirements of the current world of labor.



The initiatives in the labor spheres are weak in their educational aspects. This, questions the effectiveness of such short-lived programs working outside institutions to fulfill the pedagogical goals that for the educational system imply providing a certificate for completing a formal school level or part of a training on a specific trade (secondary school or professional training). This question also applies to flexible formats the educational system has developed to certify primary and secondary level and which are perceived by stakeholders as low in learning and teaching quality.

Apart from the lack of dialogue, the inclusion of vocational practices in the curriculum by the educational system has implied an advance in the socio-productive and labor sectors, which has achieved that both fields come closer (with successes and failures).

Furthermore, these spaces promoting approach and dialogue have opened the question on how to find a balance between training activities and those activities useful for companies, along with the difficulty to offer significant pedagogical tasks in small institutions that do not have differentiated vocational profiles.

Opportunities

With the aim of analyzing the field from the opportunities and capacities it could be observed that, although it is a field of constant dispute, both from the educational field and labor field, practices are part of their agenda.

One of the difficulties, as it has already been said, is the different meanings of practice for both dimensions. On the one hand, it is the comprehensive training from the implementation of knowledge acquired from the curriculum and, on the other hand, the training on skills/abilities for working in the labor market. Reaching an agreement that set the frontiers between these two meanings is a requirement to approach the socio-productive sector and students.

Moreover, an opportunity is that teachers of normal schools incorporate practices at the curriculum level, as well as the conditions and processes they foresee for such aim.



For youth, this opportunity is favorably perceived for the learning opportunities they offer and the options of labor insertion they promote.

On the other hand, it is also an opportunity for stakeholders to open to a different profile of students who could access the practices, such as youth in situation of vulnerability.

The know-how of social organizations, in the sense of the abilities they could develop to capture the offers by public policies or the private sector, which has been conceptualized as “management of opportunities”, is an inalienable capacity in the intervention of this universe.

At the same time, an opportunity and a finding of this study has been that, under clear and strict legal frameworks, the performance of practices does not imply potential threats to the rights of workers neither for trade unions nor for students or social organizations.

Among unions, perceptions are mainly focused on the issue of labor exploitation as a latent threat associated with this profile of actions. Delimiting the boundaries between the field of educational certifications and those of labor recruitment seems to be a priority line of intervention in this universe, as well as to eliminate threats of abusive use of labor relations or conservative reforms to collective bargaining agreements.

Gaps

- *In terms of pedagogy and management*

The pedagogical systems of practices for both fields are weak, which results in relationships between employers and productive partners that tend to be based on a management and operational setting that puts at risk the training goals.

The training stages based on soft or socio-emotional skills and/or abilities are not part of a formal framework and are not valued by the stakeholders in the educational system.



Provinces perceptions are focused in questioning the centralized methodological proposals and the lack of procedures for the application of vocational practices as they consider it makes practices more difficult to be developed.

- *In terms of regulations*

Regulatory aspects of practices have gaps that limit their scope, mainly, the restrictions imposed on vocational practices. The training for trainers does not follow models that enable a dialogue with practice initiatives (when they are developed). Furthermore, training is weak in regulatory aspects of practices.

- *In terms of coordination of stakeholders*

There is a great lack of articulation in the educational system between technical education and regular education that leads to a difficult exchange that prevents mutual learning.

The lack of knowledge of employers and some stakeholders in the educational system on the legal frameworks of protected adolescent work was also identified as a limit for the expansion of practices.

Another aspect that is worth mentioning is the specific training and high rotation of positions among policy-makers. This causes permanent interruptions to the methodological development and the design of regulatory framework of practices.

- *In terms of perceptions*

This last aspect is more than a gap; it is a threat. The perception of stakeholders regarding the educational offers to complete school years for people under 18 years old is threat as they compete with the regular system and the fact that they are flexible makes them quality to be lower. This aspect should be further studied to better understand what aspects have to be strengthened in these types of experiences.

The perceptions of the interviewed actors confirm a certain vagueness of the educational inclusion policies constituted not so much by lack of clarity of their objectives but by lack



of integration and development of ad hoc arrangements (from practice) when the regulatory frameworks do not respond to the needs. At the same time, they are not positively valued by those who know them most, who are the actors of the educational system, seeing it as a threat due to the closeness to the regular system and as a response of lower quality; nevertheless, this perception is not identified in the actors of the organizations or those of the world.

Recommendations

Articulation

It is necessary to model a work that strengthens the comprehensiveness of interventions. Build up better and greater articulation between programs so as not to have ineffective resources and put at risk the rights of the potential recipients.

To improve the scope and quality of practices, we have to mark the frontiers between the field of educational certifications and labor recruitment and eliminate any possible threat of abusive uses in the work relations.

Pedagogical aspects and management

To benefit the pedagogical system, the link between educational institutions and organizations where practices will take place must be improved. This will contribute to optimizing the entire practice process. In this regard, determining the role of the student in its own training process is also essential. The document on orientations of the province of Buenos Aires devoted to companies and educational institutions is a very good example of the potentiality of this level of regulation to create effective responses.

New roles must be included in the educational institution that encourages a rigorous pedagogical follow-up of the trainee and that sets the basis for a dialogue with the rest of the training fields.

In the case of internships, a rigorous pedagogical sense should be build, containing rules and guidelines that structure the practice. Communication strategies should be improved



regarding changes in the curricula and legal frameworks that regulate the practice, especially in the productive sector, which is the counter party necessary for a training process.

Legal aspects

Regarding the Labor Law that protects adolescents, it is important to create spaces for dialogue that increase the knowledge of on the law that allows adolescent labor under certain protection frameworks. It is also necessary to create appropriate organizations to audit, articulate and promote adolescent labor. Moreover, it is fundamental to complete and strengthen the creation of councils for the prevention and eradication of child labor (in Spanish, Consejos de Prevención y Erradicación del Trabajo Infantil, COPRETI) so they articulate with the educational system and create better institutional conditions to enforce what is provided by law.

Another recommendation, after having analyzed the vocational practices, is the need to integrate the practices to the curricula of regular secondary school as a way of achieving their institutionalization.

In particular, in the province of Tucuman, the implementation of the practices requires a revision in which the supervision of agreements is established by educational intuitions and companies. It is also necessary to make procedures and roles explicit for the implementation of practices.

In terms of legal framework of practices, it is necessary to include the cross-cutting social dialogue in the design of practices in a way that they consider the situation of stakeholders, as well as to design specific regulations adjusted to the working method of each industry and of each labor agreement. Last, we suggest the elaboration of regulations that address the specific aspects of training (such as professional training) and levels (secondary school).



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