

# The Future Of Education In Argentina: Challenges And Opportunities For Innovation

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## **Abstract:**

*This essay analyzes Argentine education, from its historical roots to its current state, challenges, and potential reforms that could improve its future. It uses a descriptive approach to study education systems, comparing Argentina to its peers and to international standards. The essay reviews official data from the OECD, World Bank, and UNESCO as well as academic secondary sources and government publications to assess Argentina's education system. Despite its universal tradition of state-funded education and comparatively high enrollment figures, Argentina faces several interrelated challenges, including stagnant student performance on PISA, a decreasing retention rate past secondary education, and socioeconomic and regional inequality. Among the causes are cited macro: unstable socioeconomic climate and uneven regional development; monocyclic and irregular government financing of education; micro: reliance on antiquated teaching models, the "digital divide," etc. The recent austerity cut affecting public universities is also considered. Argentina needs effective structural reform if it hopes to improve quality of education, increase equality, and train competitive workers and students for the 21st century.*

**Keyword:** *Argentina, education, pisa, educational inequality, education policies, teacher training, ICT, higher education university, digital divide, latin America, curriculum*

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## **I. Introduction**

One of the essential sources to understand a nation is through its education. Schools reproduce many of society's features – social, economic, and political. Moreover, education is crucial for human capital development, which translates into financial capital. Many studies prove education's long and positive impact on economic prosperity and individual well-being [23,31]. Argentina has a solid history of publicly funded education. Its current challenges to lower learning levels put its future development at risk. Law 1420, passed in 1884, declared education in Argentina free, compulsory, and secular. For many years, Argentina was the most educated country in Latin America. Now its students' performance in PISA scores has stagnated for over a decade [4]. What used to be one of the highest literacy rates in Latin America has dropped to low levels of learning despite high enrollment rates [8]. This essay traces Argentina's education history, from its inception with Law 1420 to its current issues around quality, equity, and efficiency.

Argentina has a conundrum on its hands: Universal enrollment but low learning scores [21]. Argentina is close to reaching 100% of primary school enrollment and has high rates of secondary education enrollment. Still, they do not result in high student learning [6,30]. In addition to over a decade of stagnated PISA scores, dropout rates are high, and inequality is a significant problem within the education system [8]. Students from wealthier families, rural areas, and private schools outperform their peers. Argentina's education system needs deep-level reform that will not only provide students access to education but will also provide quality education.

The issues with Argentina's economy, frequent economic crises, and political instability have hurt Argentina's ability to provide its students with a quality education [31]. Poverty levels have been increasing in the country as well [35]. In early April of this year, President Javier Milei chopped public university's budget by up to 70% in some schools threatening to close the doors of public universities and greatly increasing education inequality [10]. Professors, students, and citizens took to the street en masse in what was possibly the largest demonstration since the return of democracy. Protests due to the austerity measures proved the importance of public education to Argentina and its citizens.

This paper will discuss how insufficient and erratic funding, poor organization from decentralization, outdated education methods, poverty, and inequality cause Argentina's low-quality education [7,17,35]. This paper will also discuss the importance of technology and ICT in the classroom and the divide that exists with access to this technology [13,19,25]. The solution to improving Argentina's education system will require multi-level solutions. Not only will there have to be more significant investment into the country's education, but there will need to be improvements to that investment [15]. Teachers need to be better trained to teach students to

develop 21st learned to navigate the information age. Curriculum will need to change to focus less on memorization and more on problem-solving. Computers and technology will need to be utilized to help students close the digital divide [20]. Argentina's problem with inequality still exists today and is seen between regions and students of different socioeconomic statuses [22]. Any reform to the country's education system must focus on these gaps. If Argentina hopes to have any type of future it must invest in its students. The first step is assessing and improving its education system.

## **II. Material And Methods**

This work conducts an analysis of the Argentine education system by reviewing its history and critiquing current education system indicators. The article uses descriptive and analytical approaches by nature, utilizing research on official datasets and academic literature reviews along with education policy articles from national and international organizations such as Argentina's Ministry of Education, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, UNESCO, and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). By comparing Argentina against Latin American neighbors and OECD countries overall, this study attempts to contextualize country-specific strengths and weaknesses within the region and the wider international community [27].

Metrics of analysis include schooling access and opportunity, analyzed via school enrollment rates at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels [6, 30]. Equity is considered by measuring gaps in performance across different socioeconomic levels, regional locations, and school types (public vs. private) [22, 23]. Assessment of quality and standards comes in the form of PISA scores, as this data is the most recent internationally standardized metric available for analysis [8, 24, 27]. Public spending on education is considered both as a percentage of GDP as well compared to other countries [7]. Finally, sources are drawn on to provide insight on the current status of digital development and education-related technology via analysis of Argentina's nationwide programs [13, 19, 25, 34]. Information on teacher training and continued education policies is used as a factor by which to approximate educational quality [15, 32].

References were chosen through database searches of Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, as well as manually through the websites of various international organizations. Literature was chosen from the past 20 years where possible to ensure data used is up-to-date and consistent with modern metrics, though historical articles and books are used for context and lessons from the country's history [1, 2, 3, 14]. All statistics used in this paper are from the most recently published data, including OECD's PISA 2022 results, The World Bank's development indicators, and OECD's education statistics.

## **III. Lessons From The History Of Education In Argentina**

### **Founding Public Education (1800s)**

The education system founded in Argentina during the 19th century was built on liberal ideas of progress and nation-building. The country's 19th-century educational revolution was its promotion to regional leadership by enacting Law 1420 of 1884, which mandated free, compulsory, and secular primary education [1]. Argentina became the first country in Latin America to guarantee access to education when at the time most regions in Latin America did not offer education to their citizens. Universal education was used as a tool to assimilate citizens, as Argentina began experiencing significant waves of immigrants from Europe [21]. Public education was centralized as a means to promote citizenship and literacy among newcomers to build a cohesive identity [14].

President Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (who served between 1868 and 1874) strongly believed that "to govern is to educate", so education policy was his domain across the government [2]. The president pushed for mandatory teacher training schools across the country and even invited teachers from the United States to run them [14]. During this period the institution of public education became the great equalizer of Argentine society. Hundreds of thousands of immigrants and citizens who had received limited or no education beforehand were given the opportunity to learn and move up the social ladder. By the early 1900s, Argentina's literacy rate was one of the highest in Latin America if not the entire world [21, 31].

### **University Reform of 1918**

The next major shift in Argentine education was the reform of higher education in 1918. The movement, which began at the public University of Córdoba's student center, advocated for university autonomy, co-governance by teachers, students, and alumni; and free university education for all. The students demanded academic freedom [3]. They believed universities should operate independently of political interests and that higher education should not be reserved for the elites, but serve the needs of society as a whole. The reform spread through Latin America and irreversibly changed university education on the continent, laying down the roots for public, autonomous universities that are still in place today [18].

The impact of these reforms can still be felt politically and culturally in Argentina. Free public education at a university level was enshrined into law during Argentina's first Peronist government in 1949 [4, 18]. This

has created a strong tradition of education in Argentina that makes it politically difficult for leaders to increase tuition fees, limit enrollment, or decrease public spending on university education. When these occurrences have been attempted or proposed, citizens have taken to the streets by the hundreds of thousands in protest [10, 26].

#### Evolution and Crises Throughout the 20th Century

Argentina has experienced turbulent times during the 20th century that halted the development of its education system. Military coups, political instability, and economic crises were commonplace. The largest expansion of access to education happened under Peronist governments in the mid-century, which vastly increased education access for the working class but came at the cost of government-imposed political messages in education content [35]. Things worsened for education during military dictatorships, most recently between 1976 and 1983 when teachers, students, and intellectuals were heavily persecuted [21].

Education in Argentina has once again struggled to find footing after the return to democracy in 1983. The advent of neoliberal policies in the 1990s began centralization and decentralization policies that weakened Argentina's education system. The Federal Education Law of 1993 mandated the decentralization of management for schools to provinces and municipalities. Schools were immediately passed under the management of provinces, but they were not given the budget or resources by the national government to run them [4, 17]. As a result, there is a large quality gap between wealthy provinces who can afford to invest in education (like Buenos Aires city and province) and poor provinces who cannot provide basic education services (north and south of the country).

The most recent education law, No. 26.206, pushes for 13 years of compulsory education from 5th grade to the end of high school. Known as the National Education Law, it was passed in 2006 and recognized education as a responsibility of the State and sets a target minimum investment to education at 6% of GDP [5]. The following sections will touch on how the lack of centralized education policy has affected Argentina's struggle to meet the goals set by Law 26206. History has shown us that Argentina's centralist and federalist populations will always be at war with one another when trying to establish fair education mandates.

### IV. A Closer Look At The Current State Of Education In Argentina

#### *Access and Enrollment: A Story of Success*

Access to education seems to be an area where Argentina performs relatively well. Enrollment rates are high at all levels of education. Enrollment into primary school is practically universal in Argentina, but Argentina has also succeeded in providing high enrollment rates in secondary education relative to the rest of the region. Gross secondary school enrollment was at 106% in 2023 [6]. Enrollment ratios over 100% are due to over-age and under-age students enrolled in school. However, Argentina is one of the leaders in Latin America in terms of access to secondary education. Enrollment in tertiary education in Argentina is also relatively high. This phenomenon is partially explained by Argentina's public universities being open access universities without tuition fees [18, 30].

Yet despite impressive enrollment rates at all levels of education, near universal access to education is only part of the story. Learning what goes on inside of Argentina's schools paints a far worse picture. Students are able to get into schools, but what are they learning when they are there? The question is no longer how to keep students out of schools, but rather how to get them to learn when they are in school [21, 30].

#### *Educational Expenditure: Falling Short of Targets*

According to the National Education Financing Law of 2006, the minimum amount of GDP to be invested in education should be 6%, but the country has not been able to reach this goal regularly [7]. Investment peaked at 5.9% in 2015 and then decreased to 4.8% in subsequent years, which was lower than the mandatory level and the OECD average of approximately 5.1% [7, 30]. The following table summarizes the trend in education spending as a percentage of GDP over recent years.

**Table 1: Argentina's Public Education Spending as a Percentage of GDP**

| Year | Education Spending (% of GDP) | Legal Target | OECD Average |
|------|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 2010 | 5.2%                          | 6.0%         | 5.0%         |
| 2013 | 5.5%                          | 6.0%         | 5.0%         |
| 2015 | 5.9%                          | 6.0%         | 5.1%         |
| 2018 | 5.3%                          | 6.0%         | 5.0%         |
| 2020 | 5.0%                          | 6.0%         | 5.1%         |
| 2022 | 4.8%                          | 6.0%         | 5.1%         |

It can be observed from Table 1 that Argentina's spending allocated to education has decreased since reaching its peak in 2015; specifically, spending has been decreasing more rapidly since the current government

took office and enacted large-scale austerity cuts affecting education [10, 28]. This spending now also falls short of their legally defined target of 6%.

**Learning Outcomes: The PISA Crisis**

The student learning landscape has been uneven over the years, with a clear stagnation in results for more than a decade. There has always been a performance gap between Argentina and the rest of the world, as confirmed by student assessments [8, 24]. According to the PISA 2022 assessment, in the three disciplines evaluated, a considerable difference was observed between the average scores of Argentine students and those of the OECD, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: PISA 2022 Scores – Argentina vs. OECD Average**

| Subject     | Argentina | OECD Average | Gap | Latin America Average |
|-------------|-----------|--------------|-----|-----------------------|
| Mathematics | 378       | 472          | -94 | 383                   |
| Reading     | 401       | 476          | -75 | 407                   |
| Science     | 406       | 485          | -79 | 410                   |

Table 2's data indicates that Argentina scores are low not only compared to the OECD average but also approaching or below the Latin America regional average. It is difficult to imagine a few decades ago that Argentina's educational system would rank below several other Latin American countries because it used to be considered the regional leader [24, 27]. Argentina has not managed to significantly improve its scores since 2006 while other Latin American countries significantly progressed during those years, especially Chile, Peru, and Colombia [27].

Argentina does not fare much better when compared to its neighbors. While Argentina performs much better than some Central American countries, the country has fallen behind regional leaders such as Chile (score: 412), Uruguay (score: 409), and Mexico (score: 395) by far when it comes to mathematics [8, 27]. Students are failing to learn basic skills. A staggering 73% of Argentine teenagers failed to achieve at least level 2 of proficiency (minimum level) in mathematics at PISA 2022 while the OECD average was 31% [8]. In other words, most students are unable to solve problems that require them to use simple mathematics such as converting currencies or comparing distances.

**Table 3: PISA 2022 Mathematics Scores – Regional Comparison**

| Country    | Mathematics Score | OECD Ranking |
|------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Chile      | 412               | 52           |
| Uruguay    | 409               | 55           |
| Mexico     | 395               | 60           |
| Costa Rica | 385               | 63           |
| Peru       | 391               | 61           |
| Argentina  | 378               | 66           |
| Colombia   | 383               | 64           |
| Brazil     | 379               | 65           |

**Inequality: The Socioeconomic and Regional Divide**

Two main factors that cause low educational performance at the national level are socioeconomic inequality and regional inequality. Where students live and how much money they make oftentimes predetermine their performance levels [22,23]. Tremendous gaps exist between urban hubs like the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, which benefits from high amounts of investment and wealth concentration, and poor, rural provinces located in the north and south of the country. Rural students make up around 9% of the population and experience significantly poorer outcomes than their urban counterparts [9]. The World Bank

Examining the socioeconomic divide in educational performance, it was concluded through PISA 2022 that “advantaged students in Argentina score 75 points higher than disadvantaged students on the mathematics scale. This difference is greater than the OECD average... and is equivalent to almost two years of schooling” [8, 23]. Students who have the privilege of attending private institutions perform better than their public school counterparts. This is representative of socioeconomic segregation in Argentina [22].

Regional segregation is another critical issue affecting Argentina’s students. Northern provinces like Santiago del Estero, Chaco, and Formosa are near the bottom of the map in terms of performance on national learning assessments while the City of Buenos Aires and Province of Córdoba lead the way [9, 22]. Rates of poverty, access to infrastructure, and access to qualified teachers disproportionately affect these regions creating a negative feedback loop in which the provinces with students who need the most academic support are receiving it the least.

#### Higher Education: Dropout Rates

Argentina suffers from an unusually high dropout rate from its universities. Studies have shown that over 70% of university students fail to receive a degree, denying the country's higher education system from producing a robust pool of skilled workers [4,18,29]. Less than a quarter of Argentine citizens are able to complete education at the tertiary level which is below OECD averages [29,30]. Although Argentina's public universities have an open-access policy which allows any student to enroll, universities have been understaffed and lack support systems to help students with tutoring, financial assistance, and academic advising. This dropout problem is most visible amongst first generation university students who come from low-income backgrounds [18].

Students are taking much longer than they should be to complete university as well. Some faculties have an average of students finishing double the time of their official program length. In medicine, for example, about 90% of students dropout before receiving a degree [4].

### **V. Prospects And Challenges**

The reality of education in Argentina is one of serious, complex, and closely linked problems. If we are to guarantee all citizens access to a democratic, dignified, and quality education system, then authorities, teachers, and society as a whole will have to make decisions in the following key areas:

#### Update the Pedagogical Model and Assesment of Quality

One of Argentina's pressing problems is how to update the entire pedagogical model to teach and learn skills for the 21st century. Results from the OECD's PISA exam show that students lack skills like critical thinking/problem-solving, collaboration, and creativity in a global environment [8, 33]. Memorization is still the primary way students learn in school. Teachers don't know how to teach students via real-life situations and problem-solving projects since there isn't an orientation towards competency-acquisition [16, 20].

Argentina doesn't have a standardized nationwide exit exam that all high schools receive. This lack hinders quality control and makes it difficult to measure student performance between provinces [4, 16]. While students take national exams like Aprender, we often lack the political will to implement changes based on these results to improve our schools or shape education policy based on evidence. Moreover, we are not teaching students what they actually need to know. Curriculum updates are sparse, and what students learn in school still has yet to reflect skills necessary for new workforce demands like digital skills, financial literacy, and socio-emotional learning [20, 33]. To solve the former problems, comprehensive curriculum reform based on global benchmarks and tailored to fit Argentina's needs must occur.

#### Invest, Ensure Equity, and Bridge the Social Divide

As shown in Section IV, government funding towards education is inconsistent. For years, the national budget designated for education failed to reach 6% of GDP as agreed upon by lawmakers decades ago [7]. One of the most pressing challenges facing Argentina's public education sector, especially at the tertiary level, is the current political situation. The series of severe budget cuts put in place by Argentina's new Secretary of Education, Miguel Wiñazki, beginning in 2024 have sent shockwaves through universities across the country. Under the new presidency of Javier Milei, Wiñazki began the process of austerity by cutting public sector spending, disproportionately affecting universities and students [28]. Students and professors have taken to the streets in protest nationwide. Many fear that they may soon lose their hard-fought right to free tertiary education, at least what some may consider free in spirit [10, 11, 12, 26].

Budget cuts have long exacerbated existing issues in education quality. Students that come from low-income households often perform significantly worse than students from higher-income households. According to Argentina's latest PISA 2022 report, there was about a 75- point gap in mathematics performance between students considered "advantaged" and "disadvantaged." [8, 23]. This gap represents the difference in education quality that students receive based on their socioeconomic standing. Students from low-income families don't have access to the same resources as their higher-income peers. Factors include school quality, teacher qualifications, access to learning materials, and parent involvement are far below what their affluent counterparts receive. As a result, the student achievement gap mirrors the economic and social divide of Argentina and limits its citizens' ability to climb the socioeconomic ladder [22, 31].

Fixing this gap won't be easy. Argentina must identify solutions that channel more funding towards schools and students that need it most. Providing bonuses for teachers in poor neighborhoods, increasing funding for early childhood programs, and providing school meals and cash stipends for low-income students are proven strategies that reduce educational inequality [23]. Argentina has implemented these programs to an extent but will need to expand them if we hope to reach other OECD countries' standards.

#### Improve ICT & Address the Digital Divide

Argentina has implemented initiatives that leverage technology to help close the inequality gap. Programs like Conectar Igualdad and Aprender Conectados have given students access to technology and connected them to digital learning resources [19, 34]. Conectar Igualdad is a government initiative launched in 2010 that gave netbooks to millions of public school students and professors. At its peak, Conectar Igualdad was one of the largest “one laptop per child” initiatives in the world [19]. Researchers studying the program have found some promising results in improved digital literacy scores and attitudes towards school but failed to find significant impacts on student achievement in traditional subjects [19].

Although the government has taken strides to provide students with technology and internet access, Argentina still faces a severe digital divide. Access to technology and connectivity varies from private urban schools to public schools in the middle of rural Argentina [13]. Researchers who studied the digital divide in Argentina found that technological equipment, internet bandwidth, and digitally literate teachers are very concentrated [25]. Schoolchildren in wealthy neighborhoods are more likely to have stable internet and computers than children in low-income areas. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, this gap became even more apparent as many schools scrambled to provide at-home instruction. Students without stable internet were left behind, widening the already significant achievement gap [25, 34].

Implementing technologies that will help improve the quality and effectiveness of learning for students is of the utmost importance. To properly utilize technology in classrooms, Argentina needs a plan to train teachers on how to use technology and develop quality digital curriculum and resources [13, 19, 34]. UNOPS has worked with the Argentine government on programs to improve digital education. These projects must continue if we want technology to help close the educational and digital divide.

#### Train Teachers and Promote Continuous Development

You cannot have a quality education system without quality teachers. The competencies of teachers are considered the most crucial factor inside the school that combine to affect student learning [15, 32]. Teacher training is decentralized and handled by provinces. Today, there are over 1,300 institutions spread throughout Argentina providing teacher training. Because of this fracture, teacher training quality varies based on the province as some teacher training programs are too small to provide adequate instruction [15, 32]. The National Institute for Teacher Training was created to oversee teacher training at a national level, but it has failed to reach its maximum potential.

Problems with teacher training aside, Argentina has other issues that need to be addressed with teachers. Teachers aren't paid enough and work in deplorable conditions. Talented students are less likely to pursue careers in education, creating a shortage of math, science, English teachers. Teachers also have limited opportunities to take part in quality teacher development programs. As mentioned previously, teachers frequently strike for higher wages. These interruptions to the school year hurt students because they lose instructional time each year.

Teachers need to be equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to be an effective teacher. Supporting teachers and allowing them to continuously learn and develop their craft is how Argentina will improve the education system. International examples from countries like Finland have shown that investing in teacher quality is the best way to improve student learning [32, 33].

#### Reform University and Determine the Future of Public Universities

The current issues that public universities are facing go beyond what the budget cut will cause. As universities operate under an open-access model, they accept all students. Many students who enter university are ill-equipped for college academics and will likely never graduate [18, 29]. Students can spend over five years trying to finish a three-year degree. Not only is this a waste of time for students and their families, but it also creates enormous costs for universities and the country.

University in Argentina is another broken link in our education system that requires reform. Solutions must be found that maintain public universities as a free and public good while also improving university operations. Ideas can range from providing more resources to at-risk students, bridging the gap between high school and university, creating more flexible pathways, or aligning academic programs to labor market needs [18, 30]. The recent public outcry over cutting university budgets shows students and professors are not willing to budge on the notion of free public universities. Reform will be hard, but it is not impossible if all parties can come to the table.

#### Invest in Early Childhood Education and Focus on Learning Foundations

Investing in the early years is crucial to student development. Studies have shown that early childhood investments have the highest rates of return [23, 33]. Argentina made preschool education mandatory at age four with the passing of the National Education Law in 2006. While disadvantaged children have a right to free preschool education, outreach and teacher quality vary between provinces. Preschool education is nearly nonexistent

in rural areas of the country [9]. Children that aren't prepared for primary school are likely to face academic challenges when they enter the classroom. Without intervention, these children will fall behind and are more likely to drop out of school before graduating.

Successful examples from other countries, including Finland, South Korea and Uruguay, show that comprehensive early childhood education programs can help close the education gap and have long-term positive effects for disadvantaged children [23, 33]. Argentina should adopt a national policy focused on scaling up and improving the quality of early childhood education, with an emphasis on reaching the poorest children. Investments should be made in training teachers who work with young children, as well as creating early childhood centered curriculums and building new early childhood centers that target underprivileged communities.

**Summary of Key Challenges and Policy Recommendations**

The following table summarizes the key challenges facing the Argentine education system and the corresponding policy recommendations that emerge from the analysis presented in this paper.

**Table 4: Summary of Key Challenges and Policy Recommendations**

| Challenge Area   | Key Problem   | Policy Recommendation   |
|------------------|---|---|
| Learning Quality | Stagnant PISA scores; 73% below Level 2 in math     | Curriculum modernization; competency-based assessment               |
| Funding          | Spending below 6% GDP target; recent austerity cuts | Restore and exceed 6% GDP target; protect university budgets        |
| Equity           | 75-point gap between rich and poor students         | Targeted investment in disadvantaged schools and communities        |
| Teacher Quality  | Fragmented training; low salaries; frequent strikes | Unified national standards; competitive salaries; continuous PD     |
| Digital Divide   | Unequal access to technology and connectivity       | Infrastructure investment; teacher ICT training; digital content    |
| Higher Education | 70%+ dropout rate; inefficient completion times     | Student support services; flexible pathways; labor market alignment |
| Early Childhood  | Uneven access to quality preschool programs         | National expansion strategy; trained educators; new centers         |
| Governance       | Fragmented provincial management; uneven quality    | Strengthen national coordination; equitable funding formulas        |

**VI. Conclusions**

Argentina used to boast a hopeful educational model for other countries in the region; instead it inherited strong foundations from Sarmiento and the Reformers of 1918 yet struggles to meet present day demands. Argentina has the paradox of extreme accessibility to education but extremely low central quality. Universal and free public education has created access levels that rank amongst the highest in Latin America. Nonetheless, learning levels have not reached the same heights [6, 21, 30]. Argentina's learning outcomes, as measured by PISA scores, have plateaued for over a decade. Argentine teens score well below the OECD average in math, reading, and science [8, 24]. Dropout rates are high, tertiary education retention is below 30%, and socioeconomic and regional inequality continue to plague the system [4, 22, 29].

Many different causes are at the root of these issues. Schools and universities are severely underfunded and suffer from unreliable financing [7]. The decentralization process left a messy governance system with jurisdiction dispersed across regions [17, 35]. Teaching to the test and memorization has left students ill-equipped for higher education and the workforce [16, 20, 33]. Persistent inequality causes students to receive vastly different quality educations based on their socioeconomic status [22, 23]. Despite recent initiatives by the government, the digital divide continues to worsen [13, 19, 25].

Argentine public universities have been hit especially hard by the current administration's cuts to public university funding [10, 11, 26, 28]. The cut to public universities came so swiftly and substantially that it will probably increase the already significant equity gap. Universal access to free public tertiary education has been the norm in Argentina for generations. By dramatically shrinking universities' budgets, this administration attacks the heart of Argentina's educational tradition. If Argentina does not reach consensus on the value of investing in people, it will fall behind its peers.

Reform will have to be far reaching if realized at all. First, and most obviously, the country must rightfully fund its public school and university systems. Argentina has fallen short of the 6% of GDP yearly investment mandated by law [5, 7]. Invest more money into the system, yes, but teachers need to be qualified to earn those paychecks. Teachers are at the core of students' learning and as such investing in their training, fair salary, and continual growth will only better the students they teach [15, 32]. The national curriculum needs an overhaul. Students need to walk away from 12-plus years of schooling with critical thinking skills, creativity, digital competency, and socio-emotional learning capabilities [20, 33]. Technology is the great equalizer of the

21st century but only if implemented correctly. Invest in infrastructure, teacher training, and digital learning materials, not simply tablets [13, 19, 34]. Universidades: fix dropout rates and program relevance while maintaining open access [18, 30].

Radical economic inequality between regions and social classes is at the heart of the education problem. To be successful any educational reform will have to shrink these inequalities if not eliminate them. Frontloading investment in early childhood education, nutritional programs, and underserved schools and neighborhoods will go far in improving Argentina's long-term education outlook [9, 22, 23]. The future is not set in stone. There is much room for creativity and improvement in the Argentine education system. What happens next depends on how the country decides to approach evidence-based and sustainable policymaking.

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