

COOPERATION, EDUCATION AND FAIR TRADE: INSTITUTIONAL LINKAGES TO PROMOTE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL EQUITY

Cooperación, Educación Y Comercio Justo: Vinculaciones Institucionales para Promover Desarrollo Local Y Equidad Social

ABSTRACT

The work presented here shows the results of a case study that describes the impact on local development of a pre-university educational project that was carried out with Fair Trade premium funds. Qualitative research, descriptive type. The case of the National Agrotechnical School “Ing. Julio C. Martínez” located in the Tilimuqui district, Chilecito department, province of La Rioja, Argentina, describes from the institutional analysis and the perspective of the social economy and development the founding conditions and the main changes in the institutional environment ten years after its creation. The objectives are to analyze the inter-institutional linkages between La Riojana Vitivinífrutícola de La Rioja Ltda. Cooperative, the National University of Chilecito and the Fair Trade Association, three social actors that together made possible an agro-technical educational offer and reflected on the benefits of cooperativism, fair trade and education. Ten years after its creation, it is possible to see the socioeconomic impact produced by the National Agrotechnical School “Ing. Julio C. Martínez” which includes among others: new sources of work, greater possibility of communication and transfer of the environments of the area and access to the local population to agro-technical secondary education. These aspects contribute to reduce the existing social inequality in the area.

Alejandra María Gordillo
Universidad Nacional de Chilecito (UNDEC)
agordillo@hotmail.com

Mariano Salerno
Coordinadora Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Pequeños Productores y Trabajadores de Comercio Justo (CLAC)
mariano.s@clac-comerciojusto.org

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RESUMEN

El trabajo que se presenta expone resultados de un estudio de caso da cuenta del impacto para el desarrollo local de un proyecto educativo de nivel preuniversitario que se concretó con fondos de prima de Comercio Justo. La investigación cualitativa, de tipo descriptivo. El caso del Colegio Nacional Agrotécnico “Ing. Julio C. Martínez” ubicado en el distrito Tilimuqui, departamento Chilecito, provincia de La Rioja, Argentina describe desde el análisis institucional y la perspectiva de la economía social y del desarrollo las condiciones fundacionales y los principales cambios operados en el entorno institucional a diez años de su creación. Los objetivos que se persiguen son analizar los vínculos inter institucionales entre La Riojana Cooperativa Vitivinífrutícola de La Rioja Ltda., la Universidad Nacional de Chilecito y la Asociación de Comercio Justo, tres actores sociales que en forma conjunta hicieron posible una oferta educativa agrotécnica y reflexionaron sobre los beneficios del cooperativismo, el comercio justo y la educación. A diez años de su creación es posible advertir el impacto socio económico que produjo el Colegio Nacional Agrotécnico “Ing. Julio C. Martínez” que incluye entre otros: nuevas fuentes de trabajo, mayor posibilidad de comunicación y traslado de los ambientes de la zona y acceso a la población local a educación secundaria agrotécnica. Estos aspectos contribuyen a reducir la desigualdad social existente en la zona.

Keywords: Institutional analysis; social actors; public-private networks.

Palabras-clave: Análisis institucional; actores sociales; redes públicas-privadas.

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper presents the results of the case study of the National Agrotechnical School “Ing. Julio C. Martínez” (CoNag) in which the inter-institutional relations in the network of organizations involved in the educational project and its linkage with cooperativism, local development and educational offer were analyzed.

Subsequently, the contextual and institutional circumstances of this proposal for secondary education are specified, and it concludes with the presentation of the educational project of this national agro-technical school. It was approached from the theoretical perspective of social economy, public policy networks in the development framework and from the contributions of the Institutional-Organizational Analysis.

It has been structured by first, specifying the theoretical framework or conceptual perspective; then, indicating the methodology; after that, a brief description of the social actors involved in the inter-institutional network; then, specification of the results obtained in relation to the case study; and finally, a provisional closure since the results obtained invite further research on other aspects not considered against the possibility of future research that the results obtained invite to address.

2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE FROM WHICH THE NATIONAL AGROTECHNICAL SCHOOL "ING. JULIO C. MARTÍNEZ" IS ANALYZED

In this work, the conceptual contributions of public policy networks were rescued because they are models or schemes of complex and dynamic relationships that may be created or constituted between state (or public) institutions and the social actors that interact in each public policy area. In them, decision-making processes are based on consensus and coordination, according to the capacities and strategies of the various actors involved (CARIMAN LINARES, 2010). The author proposes a categorization of such networks that considers the level of institutionalization, the scope, the number of participants, the distribution of power, the main function and the frequency of interaction between the parties.¹

Networks constitute a new form of inter-institutional linkage and cooperation in which it is possible to articulate interests and resources between the state and society. According to Klijn (1998), they represent "more or less stable interaction patterns between interdependent actors articulated around public policy problems and/or programs" (p.34).

In this way, this inter-institutional network brings together a heterogeneous group of public and private social actors whose origins and missions are diverse, but who have agreed to direct their actions towards social and sustainable local development, betting on an inclusive education model.

The strength of the link responds to the fact that these institutions agree in their philosophy on socioeconomic development, the importance of cooperation, the

strategic value of the empowerment of human resources, becoming a relational alternative that surpasses self-centered and isolated organizational models. Cooperation, complementarity, common interests and shared objectives in a consensual framework interconnects institutions in a framework that generates a reticular dynamic suitable to the formulation, construction and collective implementation of projects that involve initiatives, resources and joint decision-making.

The complements that are possible between government commitments and business actions are deployed on the basis of initiatives that not only respond to existing needs, but also assume a dimension with a view to future development.

The new century imposes great challenges on organizations and drives them to manage actions aimed at improving the quality of life of the population. While companies are encouraged to develop their activities in a socially responsible manner², with commitment and transparency before their interlocutors and to act as true corporate citizens with rights and with duties and obligations, the role of the university in this framework of challenges and challenges presented by the contemporary world acquires great significance. In this sense, it adheres to the contributions of Kliksberg (2005), who considers that one of the greatest challenges of today's university is not only to influence social events, but to build social processes with a sustainable regional identity that ensures true empowerment from the grassroots.

Thus, the confluence of the actions of the university with key institutions for the community resizes business and educational concerns and expectations, responding to social challenges for the construction of a more just and inclusive society.

At this point, we rescue the contribution of Amartya Sen³ who has expressed that entrepreneurs and professionals are productive assets of a country. Therefore, the functioning of society depends to a large extent on their training, attitudes and behavior. Both show interrelated attitudes that combine experience and risk taking (entrepreneurs) with applied scientific and technological

¹Carimán Linares (2010): "In this way, networks involve a selected, persistent and structured set of organizations that establish differentiated relationships according to the level of institutionalization (stable/unstable, voluntary/non-voluntary), the scope of the network in policy design (sectoral/cross-sectoral), the number of participants (restricted/open), the distribution of power (dispersed/concentrated), the main function and the frequency of interaction."

²"Corporate social responsibility is a form of management that is defined by the ethical relationship of the company with all the public with which it relates, and by the establishment of business goals compatible with the sustainable development of society; preserving environmental and cultural resources for future generations, respecting diversity and promoting the reduction of social inequalities" (ETHOS Institute of Business and Social Responsibility. Brazil).

³Quoted by Bernardo Kliksberg in *Primero la Gente (People First)*. Ed. Deusto. (2008), p.266

knowledge (professionals); it is a strategic alliance that links company with university.

In turn, Porter and Kramer (2006) provide other arguments that support the importance of consolidating an interrelated society in which the various organizational actors contribute to the formation of a more inclusive society. In “Strategy and Society” (*Estrategia y Sociedad*) they state that successful corporations need society, with education, health and equal opportunities being essential for a productive workforce. The possibility of incorporating appropriate human resources may depend on several factors that such corporations can influence, such as the local education system. For these authors, it is necessary to break the structures of intergenerational reproduction of poverty and inequality and to take actions that target the channels that determine them. *Education* and *employment* are two of the main axes of this challenge. Access to knowledge provides the necessary conditions to build more equitable environments from which to overcome inequality in different areas of both economic and social development. On the other hand, employment, as a mechanism for integration and personal fulfillment, also contributes to this purpose.

It is pertinent to articulate this perspective with the idea of local development, as this educational project involves the community seeking to expand the opportunities for participation and to manage the conditions for progress based on the transformation of its socioeconomic reality.

Such local development can be assumed as a complex process, which is the product of a collective construction at the local level, which aims to mobilize the resources of the territory around a common project and to include the whole population (CASALIS, 2009). In the context of a globalized world where the crisis has an impact at all levels, local development is a strategy that contributes to expanding autonomy, enhancing local resources, and making possible a new development model with social inclusion.

In this context, the analysis of the case of the National Agrotechnical School defines a development profile for the territory, since it mobilizes local resources and improves the population's living conditions. The linkage between institutions and the formation of social networks at different levels that involve proposals for the management of local development, requires the deployment of a strategic vision and participatory planning that considers the characteristics and particularities of the territory to promote the adequate use of local resources and their potential.

For Ferrand (2002) the territorial proximity and the links between the social actors involved constitute a fundamental support as it delimits an area of socioeconomic inter-organizational action for the making of decisions that orbit in the public sphere, such as education and employment.

This places the actors before the need to evaluate the most viable strategic course in the implementation of participatory methodologies, starting from the recognition of the reality they have and reflecting on the future they wish to achieve collectively. Therefore, based on the participatory planning for local development, the actors of a defined territory are involved in the collective construction of a strategic plan at the educational level, of which the effects are appreciated in the medium term.

Through the development of these reticular dynamics, results, products or social facts are generated in the form of resources (informative, economic, cognitive, etc.) that are appropriated by the actors; among these resources are identities, norms and values, which constitute the social capital generated in the interaction. (MARTÍ, LOZARES, 2008).

Based on a concrete action, the National University of Chilecito is committed to a local problem and together with a highly representative entity of the productive sector – La Riojana Vitivinífrutícola de La Rioja Ltda. Cooperative. – assume the challenge in an effort of participative planning: the creation of a National Agrotechnical School of pre-university level of which the experience is exposed in the present paper.

The relationship and organizational interdependence and the work in networks between public institutions and cooperatives make it possible to establish links, define and concretize joint actions that contribute to the maintenance of social cohesion, equal opportunities and facilitate the development of the subject and its local environment. Network organizations differ in their composition, duration in time, content of their exchanges and level of formalization. Ideally, in a network there are relations of reciprocity, the network being made up of a system of relations where there is constant cooperation. Such interdependence not only implies the pursuit of common objectives that expand the scope of the social capital of the direct recipients of those links, but also the expansion of their benefits to society (FORNI; CASTRONUOVO; NARDONE, 2009).

For its part, the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), describes cooperatives as people-centered enterprises that are owned and managed by and for their

members to meet their common needs and aspirations, whether they are customers, workers, users or residents, cooperatives are democratically controlled. It also recognizes as an inherent capacity of cooperatives to innovate and adapt to the needs of the community and to become a tool to flood the labor field with democracy, equality and sustainability where education plays an inescapable role (ICA, 2018).

These horizons, which are assumed to be complex to achieve, become accessible when cooperation between institutions is manifested in the realization of a local development objective based on the implementation of an agro-technical educational proposal that expands the training possibilities of young people in rural, peri-urban and urban areas. Such is the case of this study: The National Agrotechnical School “Ing. Julio C. Martínez” located in the Tilimuqui district, Chilecito department, province of La Rioja, Argentina. We also agreed that:

“The presence in a given territory of representative Fair Trade certified cooperatives or plantations has a positive effect, not only within the producer organization, but also on the rural development of the respective area; as well as on the consultation and participation of the local population in rural development activities and consequently on the improvement of the social, economic and ecological conditions in the rural area where the members or workers of Fair Trade certified producer organizations live” (Centrum für Evaluation (CEval) Universität des Saarlandes, 2012, p. 2)⁴

The multidimensionality that characterizes the essence of the cooperativist task - as an economic model with strong social roots - is not limited only to the specific activity for which it was founded, but also seeks to provide a response to the requirements or needs of the population, contributing to the dissemination of knowledge, the intervention of the environment and social transformation. In this sense, the dialogue between La Riojana Coop., the National University of Chilecito, and the Fair Trade Association, allows us to achieve the objective of expanding the horizons of personal development opportunities through education and local development through the generation of employment, and the expansion of services and infrastructure.

As a social intervention, the need to open spaces for participation and generate organized actions around objectives of collective interest was raised, focusing on achieving active cooperation from multiple social actors with adequate accountability to citizens. For its part, the commitment of the National University of Chilecito to its environment constantly brings it into a search for innovative mediations that orbit around the idea of development in a more just, equitable and inclusive society, aspects that are still pending in this society. Even today, equity, economic development and citizenship continue to be the complex challenges facing our region. In the face of this, the need to build social fabrics that allow for more integrated societies is an unavoidable responsibility (COMISIÓN ECONÓMICA PARA AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE - CEPAL, 2000).

In view of the above, CEPAL (2000) proposes the construction of more participative and supportive societies where social actors interested in the diverse aspects of development coincide, and cooperation spaces where agreements can be reached and decisions made that impact the life of the community. In this context, the establishment of strategic alliances with private and nonprofit organizations to facilitate access to agro-technical education with job opportunities for young people in Chilecito appears to be a central theme that has united the interest in bringing the benefits of Fair Trade to an entire community. This decision, among other things, is making it possible to neutralize the exodus of young people to other regions, which a priori offer greater possibilities of progress, broadens and democratizes access to education, and promotes upward social mobility. This is a community of people who operate beyond their private activities and converge in public space and action to participate in projects and shared decisions (GORDILLO, 2018).

Thus, the planning, management and execution of an inter-institutional work in networks, impregnated by the linkage and exchange of resources favors the concretion of objectives and goals that aspire to contribute to the sustainable local development.

The National Agrotechnical School is an innovative experience in UNDEC university policy. Public and private actors have interacted at different levels and stages to form an inter-organizational matrix that rescues quotas of citizen participation, corporate and university social responsibility, sustainable social development, inclusion, empowerment and commitment to public education. This network is made up of public and private sector organizations: National University of Chilecito, La Riojana

⁴Centrum für Evaluation (CEval) Universität des Saarlandes. (2012), The Impact of Fair Trade on Poverty Reduction through Rural Development Final Report Fairtrade Impact Study, Study commissioned by TransFair Germany and Max Havelaar Foundation Switzerland, Saarbrücken, Available online February 13, 2020 at http://wfto-la.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/esumen_EstudiolImpacto_FT-Impact.pdf.

Vitivinifrutícola de La Rioja Ltda. Cooperative and Fair Trade Association.

3 METHODOLOGY

In this paper, we analyze the founding conditions of the CoNAg “Ing. Julio César Martínez” and its relationship with the inter-institutional networks, which agree and converge to facilitate the realization of this educational project. These networks operated in a synergy that promotes and supports public policies for social equity through access to education. This is a social research work, which is a form of knowledge that is characterized by the construction of empirical evidence from theory applying explicit rules of procedure (SAUTU *et al.*, 2010). It is assumed that the study of social phenomena is relative; and it can be studied and interpreted from the point of view of the actors studied.

This case study focused on the social practices that take place in that institutional organizational space and on the characteristics of the institutional network of the organizations involved. It is a qualitative research that focuses on the process of collection and analysis. The method applied is case study. It is interpretative given that the researcher makes his own description and assessment of the data. It is appropriate when the researcher is interested in the meaning of human experiences and values, the internal and individual point of view of the people and the natural environment in which the studied phenomenon occurs, or when a close perspective of the participants is sought (HERNÁNDEZ; FERNÁNDEZ; BAPTISTA, 1991). The case study method is a valuable research tool and its greatest strength lies in the fact that through it the condition of the people involved in the phenomenon is measured and recorded. (YIN, 1989 citado por MARTÍNEZ CARAZO, 2006). The techniques that were applied are: documentary analysis, non-participating observation and in-depth interviews with the director, the vice-director, two professors of the CoNAg; the President of La Rioja Vitivinifrutícola de La Rioja Limitada Cooperative and the Treasurer of the Fair Trade Association.

4 NATIONAL AGROTECHNICAL SCHOOL “ING. JULIO C. MARTÍNEZ”: CASE STUDY

The following is a presentation of the social actors that make up the inter-institutional network that made possible the creation of the National Agrotechnical School “Ing. Julio C. Martinez”: the National University

of Chilecito (UNdeC), La Riojana Vitivinifrutícola de La Rioja Ltda. Cooperative (La Riojana Coop.) and the Fair Trade Association (ACJ).

4.1 National University of Chilecito

The UNdeC was created on November 5, 2003 by National Law No. 25813, Ministerial Resolution No. 336, the result of a process of splitting the University of La Rioja. Its history dates to the end of 1968 when the proposal for the creation of this University was included in the Minutes of the Meeting of La Plata’s Council. In this meeting, it was agreed that the process of territorial decentralization of the national universities would be structured and from which 16 new universities would emerge. However, this creation did not take place, being reduced to a dependency of a provincial university. By Decree No. 485/73 of the Provincial Executive Branch, the headquarters of the Provincial University of La Rioja was established in Chilecito, and later the National University of La Rioja was created by Law 24,299 on the basis of the Provincial University. Thirty years after this university was set up, the community of Chilecito, through its representatives in the Senate, insisted on and requested the creation of the National University of Chilecito, an objective that was finally achieved. The institutional project conceives this university as: “1- A community associated to knowledge, integrated by people capable of generating original, critical and scientifically based knowledge; 2- An institution oriented to produce value from the public sector; 3- A University located in the society that supports it and to which it provides adequate, pertinent and creative answers.”⁵

The creation of the National Agrotechnical School within the UNdeC is based on the ideas of the Institutional Project they express:

- a) That, the University must participate socially, incorporating the demands and needs as a mechanism to promote regional development,
- b) That, the University assumes the commitment with the improvement of the quality of the educational system. In this perspective, the diverse actions of articulation with other universities, with the non-university tertiary and secondary education subsystem stand out.
- c) That, the UNDEC will promote the signing of collaboration agreements with government institutions (municipal, provincial and national), companies, NGOs

⁵Universidad Nacional de Chilecito, Proyecto Institucional, pag.22. Available at <http://www.undec.edu.ar/Documentos/Proyecto/institucional.pdf>

and other institutions in the region, the country and the world; as well as the constitution of networks that help to promote and carry out, in a coordinated manner, actions that will have as their purpose the improvement of the quality of life of the inhabitants.

The UNdeC prioritizes the link with society, constituting an essential vector in the definition of its policies. Along this line, it frames a series of actions oriented to sustain an adequate participation in the local environment and articulates its actions with different sectors involved in the problem of sustainable social development.

4.2 La Riojana Vitivinifrutícola de La Rioja Limitada Cooperative

This cooperative began its activity in 1940. It is made up of more than 350 wine and fruit producers, most of them small and medium sized, who live in the productive area of the Famatina Valleys, in the province of La Rioja. It produces and markets wines, sparkling wines, grape juice and olive oil. It commercializes its products in the internal and external market.

It has quality certification ISO 9001/2000, Organic Production, FAIRTRADE INTERNATIONAL, HACCP, BCR. In the year 2006 it certified the FAIRTRADE Standards. The management is not only oriented to the search of the economic profitability, an indispensable condition in all commercial activity, but also constitutes a social support for its human resources, category in which its associates are included as well as its employees.

The economic and social impact of the activity carried out by La Riojana Coop. in the area can be seen in its condition as a permanent and temporary source of work for numerous families (more than 300). Approximately 80% of its total corporate body is made up of small producers whose properties are productive units with a cultivated/cultivable area of between 0 and 10 hectares. La Riojana Coop. supports a group of people who are vulnerable to the conditions of a market economy. The above is based on the mission of this organization:

“... the daily work is based on the cooperative principles, assisting the associates integrally, elaborating and commercializing their production, with an adequate return for the value of the raw material. It promotes the development of human capital, aligned with the principles and philosophy of Fairtrade”.

And in the projection of a desired future, expressed in the Vision:

“Continuous improvement based on innovation and productive investment, training our staff and producers in order to expand the export activity with a solid and marked presence in the domestic market. To promote the care and defense of the environment. Economic distribution in solidarity with the resources and benefits of Fair Trade”.

La Riojana Coop. certified the Fairtrade standard in February 2006. This enabled it to allow consumers in developed countries to contribute the benefits derived from their purchases of Fairtrade certified wines produced in Bodega Central, located in Chilecito (La Rioja) through the perception of a premium or prize for each liter of Fairtrade certified wine or olive oil sold. La Riojana Coop. manages and invests these funds in projects that impact the socio-economic development of associates, employees and the community.⁶ To produce, process and market according to Fairtrade standards is to adhere to the global trend that expresses, crystallizes and projects internationally the pillars of ethics and good business practices, betting on development, growth, innovation and leadership in the field of social commitment.

It is important to emphasize that Fairtrade validates a philosophy of commercial exchange that seeks to ensure the conditions required to avoid the dynamics of exploitation of producers and employees in less developed countries, taking it as a standard for the maintenance of a competitive exchange that establishes trading conditions that allow small producers and employees to develop economically and socially. Small producers integrated in a democratic organization (cooperative, associations, etc.) that with their actions contribute to the social and economic development of its members and their communities can participate, as well as workers organized in unions, or *members of a company willing to promote their development and share with them the additional income generated by Fairtrade*.

4.3 Fair Trade Association

The FTA was created as a civil association in 2007. Its purpose is to contribute to the socio-economic, cultural and educational development of the employees of La Riojana Coop., their families and the community in which they live. This Association is made up of effective employees, contracted workers and associates of La Riojana Coop. who voluntarily wish to join this project.

⁶More information about actions and works carried out by La Riojana Coop. with Fairtrade premium funds at <https://www.lariojana.com.ar/-Comercio-Justo->

It is managed by a Board of Directors and is audited by an Audit Committee. Every year, its members meet in an Assembly to decide the actions and projects that will take place each year.

4.3 National Agrotechnical School “Ing. Julio C. Martínez”

The National Agrotechnical School (CoNAG) began its activity on May 12, 2010⁷ as a secondary education entity dependent on the UNdeC from the signing of a donation agreement with the Riojana Coop. and the FTA. It was built on a 6,192 m² plot of land that was purchased with premium funds from sales of Fairtrade certified wines exported by La Riojana Coop.⁸ which at that time was managed by the Fair Trade Association⁹. Initially it had 12 classrooms, sanitary facilities, a dining room, kitchen, infirmary, library, computer room, multipurpose room, management offices and canteen. Later the National University of Chilecito expanded the facilities to respond to the notable increase in enrollment (see Table 1).

As of February 2020, the National Agrotechnical School has an enrollment of 527 students. This is an exponential increase compared to the number of 33 students who bet on this project¹⁰.

The institutional educational project was developed by professionals from the National University of Chilecito. From the beginning, they made sure to provide access to pre-university agrotechnical education for young people in rural and urban areas, an opportunity that had not existed in the area until then. It depends on the UNdeC and aims to become a dynamic resource for social and sustainable local development based on agrotechnical education in an area where the contribution of agricultural production to economic activity is of great importance¹¹ (UNDEC, 2020). It was established as general objectives: i) To offer contents that guarantee a quality education and a solid formation of values; ii) To promote an agricultural education with a curriculum appropriate to current requirements; iii) To encourage the training of young people to promote development, creativity and work in agricultural production and the environment.

TABLE 1 – Enrollment of new students - years 2010-2020. Source: the authors (2020).

Year	New students
2010	33
2011	23
2012	64
2013	103
2014	106
2015	93
2016	108
2017	106
2018	102
2019	103
2020	99

The program has been designed for students to develop practices and integral competences for future work performance, integration, sense of institutional belonging, cooperation and the exercise of multiple skills according to their possibilities and creativity. After six years, the graduate will obtain the title of Agricultural Technician and as such will have a basic training and solid knowledge in Agricultural Sciences. The skills acquired over six years of agro-technical training will qualify them to:

- a) Apply fundamental principles of the basic disciplinary areas that will allow them to capture, incorporate and know how to use strategies in the work environment,
- b) Implement basic notions in alternative productions in agricultural administration and legislation and human resources,
- c) Develop actions that favor the local development of the community,
- d) Understand the prevailing reality and learn to be an agent of change by taking a leading role in concrete tasks,
- e) Research, experiment, adapt and develop new technologies and implement agricultural development policies.

By competences we assume the integrated set of knowledge: to know (knowledge), know-how (skills), knowing how to be (as attitudes and values that guide behaviors and decision making), knowing how to act (performance) applicable to a specific field or general application. That is to say, with the acquired knowledge, the graduates of this pre-university school will be able to work as Technical Assistants in official or private

⁷Ministerial Resolution of creation N° 2872/15.

⁸La Riojana Coop. Vit. de LR Ltda. FLO ID 3657 – www.lariojana.com.ar

⁹The administration of Fairtrade premiums of certified wines exported by La Riojana Coop. oversaw the FTA from 2006 to 2013, year in which La Riojana Coop. changed the certification of hired labor to SPO. Information provided in an interview with Mario J. Gonzalez, President of La Riojana Cooperativa.

¹⁰Information gathered in an interview with the Director of the National Agrotechnical School, Prof. Luis Bordon de Dallaglio in February 2020.

¹¹Source: National University of Chilecito- UNdeC www.undec.edu.ar

organizations, companies, in fruit crops, in fields, greenhouses, in packing sheds and in official or private research institutions.

The convergence of the founding objectives of the three organizations involved encouraged and facilitated the realization of this project, which shows the importance it attaches to networking, as they operate in a synergy that promotes and supports public policies for social equity through access to education. This initiative contributes to the establishment of socio-cultural conditions that contribute to family integration and reduce the need for students to migrate to urban centers in search of educational opportunities (GORDILLO; MAZZOLA, 2012; GORDILLO, 2016). The National University of Chilecito provides all the personnel necessary for the development of educational activities. It has a staff of 56 teachers, 12 preceptors, and 15 general service and maintenance personnel. It also has a school canteen where 9 people and a nutritionist work¹².

The incorporation of these human resources has allowed to conform a highly qualified work team for the teaching and the conduction of the establishment, that contributes to develop this project. The possibility of building knowledge within the university, adapting it and transferring it to secondary education, through this institution, strengthens and prioritizes local educational action. In this way, it guarantees an education that prepares students to continue higher studies, while providing a disciplinary learning that will enable them to satisfactorily develop specific work activities. As of December 2019, 186 Agricultural Technicians have graduated from CoNAG. Some of them are continuing their university studies at UNdeC, in careers related to their agro-technical training: Agricultural Engineering, Bachelor's Degree in Enology. Others are working in their own family enterprises or hired by third parties.

4.4 An organizational matrix designed for inclusion

For the design of the functional organic structure of this school, the needs of the educational institutions of secondary level were considered, as spaces of formation of adolescents inserted in a particular socio-cultural reality. For this purpose, the creation of a Curriculum Advisory and a Community Advisory was planned, as well as an Educational Guidance Office. This last one is formed by three graduates in Psychology, who oversee advising and following up the learning processes of the students, giving

workshops to parents, teachers and the community in general. The National Agrotechnical School's institutional educational project (2010) states that the Workshop modality is intended to provide students with theoretical and practical tools that favor the complete integration of students into the institution and contribute to the objective of forming them integrally. The highlighted workshops are Study Techniques, Education in Value, Sexual Education, Computer Science, among others.

4.5 The school and its relationship with the community

In its objective to extend the networks of interaction and reciprocity with the entire community, the UNdeC contributes to providing opportunities not only of an educational nature, but also of a labor nature. In this sense, in addition to academic activities, additional services have been provided for students and staff of the institution. A dining hall has been set, which is administered by the University Foundation (FUNDEC) and has incorporated six employees who reside in the area, as well as a nutritionist who is in charge of supervising the service. The possibilities of transferring students and staff were also expanded by incorporating an exclusive school transport service. It should be noted that the CoNAG has established priority access for young people living in Tilimuqui and the rural and peri-urban areas surrounding the establishment, followed by the children and grandchildren of members and employees of La Riojana Cooperative and the UNdeC, and finally the students of other schools in the city of Chilecito.

On the other hand, to attend the administrative needs, personnel from the town of Tilimuqui has been hired and the cleaning and maintenance services of the institution have been outsourced and oversee a local company. The expectations that this project has generated in the community have allowed a wide turnout of the families whose children attend the school. This has been evident in the degree of involvement of parents in the activities proposed by the institution, among which we can highlight the wide participation in the national festivities or any event that calls them to collaborate.

The CoNAG has generated an instance of linkage with the community from the integration of other schools in neighboring districts for shared activities; the parades organized on national holidays are evidence of this. It is worth mentioning that this school received the recognition of the National Inter-university Council (CIN) for its concrete contribution to the generation of new forms of

¹²Source: <http://www.agrotecnicotilimuqui.edu.ar/>

global-local cooperation within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals promoted by the UN. Through Resolution 733/11, it highlighted this experience as one of the actions that contribute to the IX Millennium Development Goal: “To promote a global partnership for development”, also emphasizing “the existence and consolidation of a pre-university education project in Chilecito, La Rioja”.

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

CoNAg is an example of cooperation between social actors committed to the community. An inter-institutional network that has shown its solidity and stability in that it has established a persistent link that has been maintained for almost twelve years. The network manifests a level of voluntary institutionalization and commitment to the community and socioeconomic development. This network has awakened the interest of other social actors linked to the UNdeC, for example a bank that has donated equipment for the operation of the school canteen. This constitutes an opportunity to expand the network and the possibility of projecting other actions in the future.

The link with UNdeC - on which it depends - as well as with the other two organizations of the local productive life allows to conduct complementary projects with the economy of the department Chilecito (internships, assistantships, etc).

The joint effort of this inter-institutional network and the execution of the educational project facilitated access to secondary education for a rural population that did not have this possibility locally. This is making it possible to provide equal opportunities to a sector that until 2010 was perceived as more vulnerable.

The possibility of having human resources trained from basic educational instances in strategic orientations for the productive development of the area constitutes one of the critical factors in the search for a contribution to the promotion of economic and social well-being and the improvement of the community's standard of living.

Ten years after the inauguration,¹³ it is possible to assess the socio-economic impact produced by its location. Various effects can be observed, among which are: an increase in direct and indirect sources of employment; an increase in the possibilities of communication and

transportation (urban transport) for the inhabitants of the town.

The educational proposal of an agro-technical nature has diversified the possibilities of choice for the adolescents of the Department, which until 2010 was limited to the traditional modalities: high school, high school degree with accounting specialization, technical.

Thinking about the linkage and cooperation between UNdeC and entities of the productive sector is a way to intervene in the community dynamics to attend realities that can be surpassed, improved, transformed. It is to explore the potential of a particular society, inhabited by unique and unrepeatable subjects that can become managers of change from the transformation that education generates in them and in their environment. It is to assume the importance of establishing inter-institutional links and building a collaborative network aimed at achieving common objectives.

The data collected and the analysis carried out invite us to investigate other aspects not covered in this research: the socio-cultural and economic impact of an educational project intricately linked to Fairtrade.

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¹³The National Agrotechnical School started its activities on May 13, 2010.

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