

Parents and teachers, two important social agents in the Spanish educative organizations and their interrelations in a glocal context

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Resumen: El texto expone los resultados obtenidos en una investigación sobre centros escolares españoles, centrándose especialmente en los de carácter rural. Se analiza la institución escolar dentro del entorno en que se ubica, tanto a nivel local como global, haciendo especial hincapié en las relaciones establecidas entre padres y profesores.

Palabras clave: educación, escuela-red, rural, agentes sociales.

Abstract: This paper shows the outcomes from a study about Spanish schools, paying special attention to the rural ones. The analysis made involves the school institution inside the environment in which it is located, both local and global, and emphasizing the relationships between parents and teachers.

Key words: education, net-schools, rural, social agents.



In a historical moment marked by the velocity the social changes happen, the school has and must have a great protagonism. The advances in the development of new technologies have produced numerous changes in all the aspects, one on the most important is the way of the information is transmitted and the speed this is done. This circumstance has facilitated the globalizing process at the same time that many identities have been losing their identities.

Our interest has been focused on the schools located in rural spheres where the localization of the globalization is joined. These two concepts, although opposing, do not need to be necessarily excluding. Nogué Font talks about an intermediate sphere, the “glocal”, that would be in the middle of them, mixing the sociocultural characteristics own of a community, area or district, with some wider ones of a more extensive and heterogeneous context.

The school in the rural area¹ must be a participant of the advantages the new information technologies offer, since they can solve some of the traditional problems of this kind of certain education spaces (the difficulty of access to resources, isolation, transportation problems). A simple example is that a school cannot be filled with books, but indeed of *pdf* files.

With this reference framework, we have led an investigation² to analyze the Spanish centres as organizations that establish relations with their closest environment, and with the social agents that form it.

Our starting point has been considering the education centres as organizations, determining the following classification: aggregate-centre (if the individual elements predominate), structure-centre (when it is about maintaining the organization and the structure in a stable way) and system centres (where the fundamental objective would be the means and the relations with the environment).

¹ Although later and due to fluency we will be using the expression rural school, we consider that terminologically is more precise to say “school in the rural environment”.

² Project called “Configuraciones organizativas y modelos profesionales: un análisis de las relaciones entre la profesión, la organización y el entorno escolares”, directed by Mariano Fernández Enquita and sponsored by the Ministry of Science and Technology.

In this text we focus on a more specific form in the aggregate-centres, and within these we shall particularize the aspects linked to the schools in the rural zones.

The rural school has been object of relative attention. There are plenty of studies on the educative inequalities, among them the one referring to the rural medium in relation to the urban one, but almost always from the areas of knowledge as the schoolteaching and the pedagogy, being scarce the sociological studies, with some few notable exceptions as the cases of Carlos Lerena or Marina Subirats.

Development of the study

The research combined the use of different research techniques, both qualitative as well as quantitative. Vast information comes from the cases analysis done in more than forty education centres, by means of personal interviews with their social agents: members of the leading staff (direction, study headship), teachers, mothers and fathers, students and other professionals such as psychologists, councillors, etc. We also developed a thorough documental revision: Annual General Programming, Curricular Project, Regulation of Interior Regimen, Council and Faculty Acts, Annual General Memoir, etc. We complemented the analysis with the participant observation of the different elements that form a centre, many of them captured by photographs that portray from the participation of students in thematic activities shown of the murals of the corridors, to the teachers' room, the informatics room, the classes or any of their facilities. The dialogue with different social actors of the centre: teachers, the director, students, fathers, janitors, among others, has allowed completing qualitatively our knowledge of the studied centres. So, for example, the easiness or difficulty of the centre to contact parents and/or students willing to be interviewed, the location where those interviews took place (inside or outside the facilities), or the willingness for the delivery of the documentation are elements that contribute to providing us with added information to the merely gathered with the interviews or the documental analysis.

A second very important methodological element has been the application of a questionnaire at a national level to almost one hundred centres. Their

selection was structured according to the typology of centres used in the project (aggregate, structure and system), combined with other representation criteria as the geographical nature, the nature of the centre (public or private) and the inclusion of all educative levels.

There were ten the rural centres deeply analysed. Salamanca, Alicante, Cáceres and Ávila are the provinces where such centres are located.

About the questionnaire, the interviewed rural centres have been all those with less than 10,000 inhabitants, following the INE³ classification criteria. Similarly, we have examined the data of the urban centres to establish possible differences between the two contexts.

The Spanish rural context

Every organization has to bear in mind the means where it is located and where its activities take place and, at the same time, this should not be a mechanism of inequity. But the truth is that the school is a product fundamentally urban, something obvious for any professional interested in this subject. This is the reason why, very briefly, we shall refer to some of the characteristics of the current rural context, without leaving aside that it is very heterogeneous —every day more— and offers a large variability among zones.

That the Spanish rural zone has stopped being eminently agrarian is an argument shared by most of the authors we will mention next; however, it is an aspect that has do be worked on to end with this stereotype.

Pérez Yruela considers that the rural space stops being an exclusively agrarian space to establish some competence for the use of the space, mainly in the zones close to the cities or suitable for leisure, tourism or certain kinds of industry facilities (Pérez Yruela, 1990).

On the other hand, M. Etxezarreta, proposes that is the very rural population who direct and perform the rural development, becoming development agents. It is noticeable his mention of the political agenda reflects factors such as the diversification, the environment and the multi-activity, being these the new values the rural policy is based on and the

³ Instituto Nacional de Estadística (National Statistics Institute)

economic and social forces that guide it. Regarding the strategies for the rural development, this author mentions two: to agglutinate or diversify. This very current debate has important implications in issues such as the education (Etxezarreta, 1996: 117-131).

Another of the allusions in his article “La crisis y el futuro de los sistemas agrarios extensivos” (*the crisis and the future of the extensive agrarian systems*) is that referred to the role of the local inhabitants and those who are not, which can be the origin of conflicts. The new rural inhabitants, the “neo-rural”, generate significant benefits to the zones they settle in, but also produce tensions since the traditional inhabitants of the rural medium see them as imposers of new elements they do not agree with.

The economic multi-activity is one of the main characteristics of the current rural society and one of the great possibilities of the future development. Sectors as the agro-alimentary or the rural tourism have experienced great advances in the last years. Several authors have referred to this diversification as: Moyano Estrada, Pérez Díaz, Entrena Durán and Etxezarreta, among others.

Regarding the population, the non-agrarian is increasing in the Spanish rural entities (Pérez Díaz, 1994). On the other hand, Benjamín García Sanz talks about the passing of the demographic crisis of the rural society to the stagnation and recovery. He offers us a large quantity of information on what we can call the *new rurality*: new occupants and the return of old emigrants, a new culture adapted to the times that share a common interest to revitalize and update the collective identification (García, 1994).

The time of the massive migrations from the countryside to the city has been left aside, and there are authors who maintain that certain rural nuclei are being repopulated by inhabitants who arrive or that come back to their places of origin, or come back during holidays, festivals, weekends (Nogué, 1999). This does not happen thorough the Spanish geography, and therefore we have to be realistic; the small municipalities or population entities are usually losing population, but the general tonic seems to be changing.

It is necessary to mention the new ways of life that lead many people to reside in rural zones close to the cities, where they work. The creation of

“dormitory cities of municipalities” is relevant trend.

Recently, in the rural space there have been new conflicts, which can be summarized with the conflict in the production and the planning (Vicente, 1993).

An article by Benito Cruz is based on a study sustained in qualitative methodology, specifically in discussion groups. Parting from the hypothesis that in the rural means an important change regarding the labour market has taken place, supported in an ideological change, mentions subjects as interesting as the attitude change about the work, the improvement of the services, retirement, formation and advising, associations, etc. (Benito, 1998).

It is talked about a rural World that, on one hand, is directed to a population descent, at the same time that it emerges in other zones. It is a medium in constant change, and currently in an ebullition period within a global economic structure on one hand, and local on the other. A series of problems that the rural society has to solve in order to achieve its development was extracted: the scarcity of the basic services, the ownership of the lands by retired people with the problems this brings along, the need of formative improvements more suitable with the reality, etc. It is also observed a perception of the improvement in other aspects, giving as a conclusion a more modern and opened consciences, having in mind all the conditionings that are essential in the real world.

Finally, we mention the rural school. Two interesting articles: “Maestros rurales y ovejas eléctricas” (*rural teachers and electric sheep*) (Álvarez, 1998) and “¿Existe la escuela rural?” (*Is there a rural school?*) (Barrio, 1996) constitute the two sides of the coin this kind of school is. The first one states that we can affirm that this institution is different from that of the city; whereas the second argues that the differences are due to the human, material resources deficit, among others, but not to the contents.

Barrio considers that the rurality in its traditional sense does not exist any more. Even though it is true that the rural world has evolved a lot during the last decades, it is not less true that at the beginning of the XX century we can still find (although not in a large quantity) with rural nucleus with traditional ways of life.

Therefore, this mixture of characteristics of the rural medium does not allow us generalize, although we can talk about a common tonic.

Two social actors of the rural context: parents and teachers, and their interrelation

Our sociological vision of the school parts from the idea that it is fundamental to identify and analyze the relations that it establishes with its immediate environment, who performs such relations, how these are done and their frequency. The characterization of the school as an education building occupied by teachers and students seems to be too reductionism, and before this we propose a vision of school-net; this is, that where all the social actors interact among them with different kinds of relations, breaking the borders of the school, as a building, and even reaching to the formation of associations, enterprises, or institutions of the zone where the school is located.

Although the social agents who participate in the scholar framework are several, we analyzed two of them: the parents and the teachers, since they got paradoxical results worth of an exhaustive analysis. In the first place we detail some of the characteristics of the rural teachers and the fathers and mothers in order to better understand the relations they engage among themselves.

The teachers of the rural zones

It is evident that the daily practice in the classroom is heterogeneous and sometimes complex indeed.

Before continuing it is necessary to precise that the realities between the professional work of a teacher can be very different in function of the kind of school he or she works at. Although the context is the same, the rural medium presents different school sizes and structures which determine a very different *modus operandi*. Logically, it cannot be work in the same way in a small school with one teacher, few students and several levels, than in an also rural centre but where there are several classes with a larger number of students, a specialized distribution of teachers and subjects, more resources, etc.

That is the reason we focus with special attention on the smaller schools, since we consider that the graduates schools are very similar to the peri-urban centres and even to the urban ones: a larger number of teachers, independent classrooms for each level, interrelation between the teachers and different areas, more and better resources and equipment.

From this school typology, Boix Tomás estimates that a rural school teacher needs (Boix, 1995):

- Having a general knowledge of the different curricular subjects.
- To use strategies and techniques to maximize the self-learning and the participation in activities.
- To know the general characteristics of the children's psychology.
- To motivate in order not to fall in boredom and monotony.

Let separate things. A teacher who works in classroom with different levels needs to dominate the subjects and knowledge related to each course. This demands an extraordinary effort; obviously it is not the same to do a plan for 25 pupils of a course, of two or three subjects, than doing it with almost all the subjects of various courses (currently they are not all of them, do not forget the itinerant and specialist teachers), although the number of pupils is not more than a dozen.

Although a priori this circumstance may seem a disadvantage for the teacher as well as for his or her pupils, if we go further we will prove that probably it is indeed for the teachers, but not that much for the pupils. For the teacher to work in a classroom with different levels will demand an extra effort of coordination, increment of knowledge, programming of different courses and subjects; but the simultaneity of the teaching implies an advantageous situation for the pupils because:

- They know the teacher and the teacher knows them, therefore avoiding the mutual hooking up.
- The teacher who works with different levels has identified all the curricular contents that could be more complicated for their addressees in the following courses, and these are a very useful tool to compensate in a continuous way throughout the different academic years.
- The teaching is totally individualized and, therefore, much more versatile.

The second aspect, referred to the use of strategies and techniques for the maximization of the learning process and the participation in activities, is of a fundamental importance in small schools where the teacher has to divide his/her time (as we have mentioned before) among different pupils of different courses. Therefore, it is indispensable, that the pupils (especially those of the higher levels) occupy a large part of their school day in self-learning activities. This practice will be very useful in their academia future and, at the same time, it allows the teacher to spend more time with the lower level pupils, whose attention and tutelage needs are more.

Lastly, the author mentions the advantage of having knowledge on children psychology and to motivate them to avoid monotony. We agree with him on qualify them as fundamental in the rural medium, although not exclusive of such context.

We have been mentioning some of the specific characteristics that mark the working days in the rural context. But there are more aspects that characterize their performance in unitary schools of in Grouped Rural Centres: the dedication time to the pupils is very scarce; the lack of time to dedicate to each one of them makes delivering answers is a faster way (which does not favour those pupils who are slower in their learning or the introverted ones); less efficient pupils are more tolerated in order not to break the class functioning dynamics (which some authors have called the “strategic tolerance”); sometimes the progress of the students is tested as other pupils are in other activities; there is a public exposition before the pupils: everyone sees how the others are treated and the teacher has to assume the centre manager role.

Although the identification elements of the small schools from rural communities are several, with this listing we can establish a general context that helps us to understand the specification of these education centres that consequently will have to undertake strategies adapted to their characteristics. For a teacher who works in these small rural schools there are four key skills: multi-dimensionality, simultaneity, immediateness and imprevisibility. With these the teacher will be able to achieve the optimization of the time and resources, as well as obtaining a higher performance.

The socio-educative functions of the rural teacher are wide and varied, even more than those their colleagues of the urban context could be. We can mention the following:

- Integrator-connection: between the demands of the society and the educative reality.
- Sociocultural entertainer
- Academic guide and counsellor
- Psycho pedagogue
- Researcher: it is fundamental that they know the environment the school is in.

Once more we observe that the schools from the rural context demand an added effort due to their particularities.

Focusing our attention to the teacher figure, we now analyze the isolation of the teacher who works in rural environments, because it is considered very defining and of the utmost importance. This isolation can be one of the motives why the rural schools are still a passageway for many teachers: “nowadays there are not many the rural schools that have a definite faculty” (Boix, 1995: 51).

The consequences are obviously negative at the time of elaborating the educative and curricular projects. The students do not have enough time to adapt to the new teacher and, therefore, some parents decide to take their children to urban centres with more stability regarding the faculty.

In the last years the situation has improved with the support services and specialist teachers that periodically go to the rural schools, with great effort from the teacher that was alone most of the day.

The teacher’s formation courses are a forum that facilitates, apart from the professional recycling, a meeting point that helps mitigating the rural teachers’ isolation feeling.

As sociologists we cannot avoid mentioning the condition of sociologic strange of the rural teacher mentioned by Jonh Brebeck.

Carlos Lerena also approaches this phenomenon with certain profusion and relates it with the great teacher’s mobility, which at the same time produces the uprooting. We mention some of his words “there are no educators in general, as there is not a teaching system in general, as there

are no generic functions of such system: the groups or classes in conflict the ones that provide a peculiar individuality to each one of their particular spheres” (Larena, 1987: 460).

The marginality and uprooting situation is also reinforced by the strong body spirit and the increment of the homogamy (marriage among teachers) rate. On the other hand, the social and cultural isolation of the teachers who work in farther rural contexts make them idealize the society, their profession, from there the traditional role of missionaries that for decades has been attributed to them. The trend seems to indicate a relevant change due to the possibilities that the new technologies offer regarding the communication, the access to information and to resources. Besides, the teachers are more and more unattached of the life in the municipalities where they work and this isolation so characteristic a few decades ago nowadays is rare.

Evidently the situation of the rural school teachers has changed, at the same time that the rural society has rapidly evolved. We remember some lines by Fernández Enguita:

A few decades ago, in Spain, a large part of the teachers were more like autonomous workers who set up their schools in the small towns, although with the support from the town councils as premises and subventions for the pupils with no economic resources. At the unitary private schools, the teacher was the entrepreneur and the worker at the same time, maybe with the aid of his wife or a servant; he was, in a strict sense, a petit bourgeois (Enguita, 1990: 157).

And before going to the fathers and mothers’ figures we show a quotation that very assertively approaches the figure of the rural teacher:

Traditionally, the figure of the teachers has worked as a bridge between the rural and the urban cultures, and this in two ways. On one hand, the studies of the schoolteaching have allowed, in a much higher extent than the other classic careers, to go out, or even escape, from the Spanish towns. On the other hand, and reversing the process, the rural teacher has been the figure that has incarnated the urban culture within the rural context (Larena, 1987: 451-452).

The fathers and mothers of the rural context

The parents of pupils of the rural context present certain particularities we shall analyze, since we consider them relevant actors in the teaching-learning process of their sons and daughters.

The rural medium has differential elements that have to be taken into account at the moment of the political, economic and educational planning, if it is intended these to be operational, efficient and successful. One of them is the different formation level the students perceive between their homes and the school (always generally speaking). There are cultural differences, different vocabulary, and this situation can become an awkward situation for the parents when they get in contact with the teachers when perceiving the cultural differences.

Although (as we have mentioned before when we talked about the contextualization of this communication), the rural medium is not exclusively agriculture, the agricultural and cattle raising activities are still predominant in many municipalities, and the generational takeover that takes place in many of the towns corresponds mainly to those who have a higher education level. Many young people have left the municipalities to study and they do not come back. This circumstance gives the school a higher responsibility at the time of meeting certain cultural lacks of the environment.

The parents of Spanish rural students make themselves heard some decades ago in the scholar concentration process. In provinces as Salamanca there was an important protest movement against the suppression of small rural schools, supported by the *Movimiento de Renovación Pedagógica* (*Pedagogic Renovation Movement*).

Carmena and Regidor gather the advantages and disadvantages the education concentrations have for the parents. Among the advantages are spending more time with their children and a higher relation with the teacher. Among the disadvantages are stand out the one that "their children receive a bad quality education" (Carmena and Regidor, 1985).

The parents have not being paid too much attention in the studies about the rural school and, however, there are social agents of a fundamental transcendence. Currently, in the municipalities that are closer to the province

capitals, the parents are taking their children to urban schools because they believe these are better than those in their own municipalities. We insist on this since it has to be taken into account due to the repercussions that this could have for the maintenance or closing of a large quantity of rural schools.

In many texts about the rural school the fathers and mothers from rural mediums have been seen as less implicated in the education of their children, more unwilling to exchange opinions with the teachers. For Miguel Ángel Ortega this is true and as it is stated in the following words that try to describe the generality of the rural schools: “that the school buildings are worse than the urban ones, their clientele less faithful, the legislation less attentive to their particularities, the fathers and mothers are more reticent [...] these are not new situations or the product of a progressive deterioration of the situation” (Ortega, 1995: 88).

Next, when analysing the relations established between parents and teachers we will see if this is true or not.

Parents and teachers relationships

In municipalities where there are still unitary schools or there are small schools that are part of a Grouped Rural Centre (GRC), parents usually have a daily relationship with their children’s teachers and talk to them when they pick them up everyday. A different situation takes place with the parents of pupils of the scholar concentrations located in other municipalities and whose student body is larger. In this case the relations are less frequent.

The director of a GRC referred to the parents-teachers relations in the following terms: “they are very kind because they are just a few and we know each other [...] It is very different in a capital”.

Carmena and Regidor sustain that the relations that the rural teachers have with the parents are occasional and rare (Carmena and Regidor, 1985). In the line of these authors is the following allusion from other director of a rural centre:

The relations with the parents are complicated because there are barrier elements between the teachers and the parents that make that at certain times can be quite defensive. There are some other elements as is the participation of the

parents in the education life in general, this is, if certain nerves are touched or not, if they respond to some particular interests and in general to the immediate position of the faculty is of immediate rejection to the parents' participation. Other elements that make the participation difficult is that the faculty live far from the town.

The following Tables gather the frequency with which the teachers have contact with their pupils' parents.

Table 1
Frequency contact with parents. Rural context

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	Daily	8	17.0	19.5	19.5
	Weekly	7	14.9	17.1	36.6
	Monthly	7	14.9	17.1	53.7
	Quarterly	15	31.9	36.6	90.2
	Annually	1	2.1	2.4	92.7
	Never	3	6.4	7.3	100.0
	Total	41	87.2	100.0	
Lost	NS/NC	4	8.5		
	System	2	4.3		
	Total	6	12.8		
Total		47	100,0		

Source: Own elaboration.

We can infer that the differences between the rural and urban mediums are not that significant as it could be thought they would be. Even so, there are some differences between the two contexts: whereas in the rural one 19.5% the interviewed teachers affirms having daily contact with their pupils' parents, in the urban medium the percentage is of 12.8%. On the other hand, on a weekly basis, the urban parents present more contact with the teachers than the rural parents: 30% and 17.1%, respectively. Quarterly we found another significant difference 36.6% in the rural context and 25.9% in the urban one.

In other words, the rural teachers have 53.7% of contact with the parents once a month or more often, and in the case of the urban teachers the percentage is 58.8%.

Table 2
Frequency contact with parents. Urban context

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	Every day	41	11.9	12.8	12.8
	Weekly	96	27.8	30.0	42.8
	Monthly	51	14.8	15.9	58.8
	Quarterly	83	24.1	25.9	84.7
	Annually	25	7.2	7.8	92.5
	Never	24	7.0	7.5	100.0
	Total	320	92.8	100.0	
Lost	NS/NC	17	4.9		
	System	8	2.3		
	Total	25	7.2		
Total		345	100.0		

Source: Own elaboration.

We found quite worrying that 7% of the faculty from both contexts states not having any contact with the parents.

The frequency with which the teachers establish contact with the parents or their representatives is, logically, lower.

The most common answer is quarterly, in both the rural and the urban contexts. If we pay attention to the accumulated percentage we can see that the rural context maintains contact at least once a month in 76.2% of the cases in contrast to the 61.6% of the urban context.

Table 3
Frequency of contact with parent representatives. Rural context

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	Weekly	1	2.1	2.4	2.4
	Monthly	4	8.5	9.5	11.9
	Quarterly	27	57.4	64.3	76.2
	Annually	6	12.8	14.3	90.5
	Never	4	8.5	9.5	100.0
	Total	42	89.4	100.0	
Lost	NS/NC	3	6.4		
	System	2	4.3		
	Total	5	10.6		
Total		47	100.0		

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 4
Frequency of contact with parent representatives.
Urban context

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	Every day	6	1.7	1.9	1.9
	Weekly	11	3.2	3.4	5.3
	Monthly	35	10.1	10.8	16.1
	Quarterly	147	42.6	45.5	61.6
	Annually	72	20.9	22.3	83.9
	Never	52	15.1	16.1	100.0
	Total	323	93.6	100.0	
Lost	NS/NC	16	4.6		
	System	6	1.7		
	Total	22	6.4		
Total		345	100.0		

Source: Own elaboration.

We wonder if the parents-teachers relations were better a few years ago, when the teachers lived more frequently in the towns where they worked, if those would vary in relation to the teacher's origin social class, from their rural or urban upbringing. For Sánchez Horcajo (a couple of decades ago), an important percentage of the rural teachers of Castilla and León were from the zone, the province and in some cases from the municipality (Sánchez, 1985). Carlos Lerena approaches the teachers subject with these words: "traditionally, the social origin of the teachers has been defined by these three elements: medium classes origin, with a strong participation of the rural society and with a significant presence of the proletariat" (Lerena, 1987: 449).

Although at first sight the rural origin of many teachers can seem a positive aspect for the school in that context, in a research in the Pallars Sobirà region in Lérida, an obviously rural zone, most of the parents preferred teachers who were not native from the zone because in that way "everybody is the same" and there are not favourites (Knipmeyer et al., 1980).

In most of the interviewed centres, if not all of them, the teachers complain about the lack of communication with the parents, who generally approach to them when there has been an incident with their children or when it is time for the grades and these are not the expected ones. These complaints were heard in both the rural and the urban contexts. The following words from a teacher from an institute located in a small municipality are very clear about this:

'This is one of the battle horses. This is one of the most heard complaints we have all the teachers, all the education staff, because we consider that with some honourable exceptions, most of the parents do not worry too much about their children, and if they do is when the solutions have long gone, when they receive the grade cards in June.

One of the questions from our questionnaire was interested in knowing how the teachers considered the lack of support by the families. A 54.4% of the rural teachers values it as a first order problem, 29.5% as a secondary problem and for the 15.9% do not consider it as a problem. The data is extremely clear.

In the cities the situation is acute, if possible, passing from 60.3% of the interviewed that consider as high the lack of family support in the education process as a first order problem.

Table 5
The problem of lack of support from the families.
Rural context.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	First order problem	24	51.1	54.5	54.5
	Secondary problem	13	27.7	29.5	84.1
	It is not a problem	7	14.9	15.9	100.0
	Total	44	93.6	100.0	
Lost	System	3	6.4		
Total		47	100.0		

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 6
The problem of lack of support from the families.
Urban context.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	First order problem	202	58.6	60.3	60.3
	Secondary problem	84	24.3	25.1	85.4
	It is not a problem	49	14.2	14.6	100.0
	Total	335	97.1	100.0	
Lost	NS/NC	2	.6		
	System	8	2.3		
	Total	10	2.9		
Total		345	100.0		

Source: Own elaboration.

Conversely, if we analyze the satisfaction of the teachers of their relation with the parents, we found that almost half of them are satisfied with this relation and 23.3% very satisfied. The reading we can do is that the teachers consider that the parents should be more involved in their children education process; but, on the other hand, with the parents they have contact with, the established relations are very satisfying.

In the results obtained for the teachers who perform their profession in the urban context the data is similar.

We have approached, through a series of statistic indicators, the opinions of the teachers regarding the parents, but, how do the teachers feel when they are evaluated by the parents?

In this case there are differences between the rural and the urban context: 64.7% and 64.9%. respectively, were considered as valued; but if we focus on the percentage from both Tables in the “very” and “little” columns, we can mention that the rural teachers feel less valued by the parents, in comparison to the urban teachers.

Table 7
Satisfaction of the teachers with the relations with the parents.
Rural context

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	Very satisfactory	1	2.1	2.3	2.3
	Unsatisfactory	2	4.3	4.7	7.0
	Indifferent	9	19.1	20.9	27.9
	Satisfied	21	44.7	48.8	76.7
	Very satisfied	10	21.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	43	91.5	100.0	
Lost	System	4	8.5		
Total		47	100.0		

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 8
Satisfaction of the teachers with the relations with the parents.
Urban context

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	Very satisfactory	6	1.7	1.8	1.8
	Unsatisfactory	25	7.2	7.7	9.5
	Indiferent	75	21.7	23.0	32.5
	Satisfied	155	44.9	47.5	80.1
	Very satisfied	65	18.8	19.9	100.0
	Total	326	94.5	100.0	
Lost	System	19	5.5		
Total		345	100.0		

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 9
Perception of the teachers of the valuation of the parents of their activity. Rural context

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	Very	3	6.4	8.8	8.8
	Sufficiently	22	46.8	64.7	73.5
	Little	9	19.1	26.5	100.0
	Total	34	72.3	100.0	
Lost	NS/NC	11	23.4		
	System	2	4.3		
	Total	13	27.7		
Total		47	100.0		

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 10
Perception of the teachers of the valuation of the parents of their activity. Urban context

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	Very	40	11.6	13.4	13.4
	Sufficiently	194	56.2	64.9	78.3
	Little	60	17.4	20.1	98.3
	Nothing	5	1.4	1.7	100.0
	Total	299	86.7	100.0	
Lost	NS/NC	40	11.6		
	System	6	1.7		
	Total	46	13.3		
Total		345	100.0		

Source: Own elaboration.

It is clear that the parents are important in the educative process of their children, but, which is the role of the parents in the education, according to the teachers? About 78% of the teachers who answered our questionnaire in both contexts think that the primordial function of the teachers is to agree with the teacher and back them up.

The low percentage of answers of the option “to participate fully in the centre”: 8.9% in the rural context and 14.4% in the urban one have caught our eyes. Another of the question of our instrument was regarding how the teachers consider the participation of the parents in the management of the centres. Most of them consider it as appropriate. The Table regarding the rural teachers presents a 75.8% of the answers between the “indispensable” and “appropriate”, whereas the one regarding the centres located in the cities is slightly higher, , 83.3%.

Table 11
Main role of the parents in the education. Rural context

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	Let the teachers do their job	3	6.4	6.7	6.7
	Pay attention to the teacher and support him/her	35	74.5	77.8	84.4
	Exercise certain control	3	6.4	6.7	91.1
	Participate fully in the center	4	8.5	8.9	100.0
	Total	45	95.7	100.0	
Lost	System	2	4.3		
Total		47	100.0		

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 12
Fundamental role of the parents in the education.
Urban context

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	Let the teachers do their job	8	2.3	2.4	2.4
	Pay attention to the teacher and support him/her	260	75.4	78.1	80.5
	Exercise certain control	17	4.9	5.1	85.6
	Participate fully in the center	48	13.9	14.4	100.0
	Total	333	96.5	100.0	
Lost	NS/NC	8	2.3		
	Sistema	4	1.2		
	Total	12	3.5		
Total		345	100.0		

Source: Own elaboration.

We have asked ourselves if the parents influence the teachers in the performance of their teaching activities. In this case we did find clear differences between the rural and urban contexts as it is shown in Tables 13 and 14.

Only 31% of the rural teachers quantify the influences as much and very much, whereas their urban homonyms do it in a 50.6%. At the same time, 69.1% of the rural professionals manifest that the influence of the parents is little or none, in comparison to a 49.4% of the urban teachers.

At first sight it may seem significant since we could think that in small contexts the communication and interaction between parents and teachers is easier, and as a consequence, the influence of the former over the latter would be higher, but we should not forget about the reciprocity of relations. What we mean is that it is possible that the teachers have more capacity of influencing the parents and not the other way around, mainly due to the mentioned social and cultural difference.

Table 13
Influence of the parents in the centre. Rural context

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	Very	2	4.3	4.8	4.8
	Sufficiently	11	23.4	26.2	31.0
	Little	27	57.4	64.3	95.2
	Nothing	2	4.3	4.8	100.0
	Total	42	89.4	100.0	
Lost	NS/NC	1	2.1		
	System	4	8.5		
	Total	5	10.6		
Total		47	100.0		

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 14
Influence of the parents in the centre. Rural context

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	Very	29	8.4	8.8	8.8
	Sufficiently	138	40.0	41.8	50.6
	Little	136	39.4	41.2	91.8
	Nothing	27	7.8	8.2	100.0
	Total	330	95.7	100.0	
Lost	NS/NC	5	1.4		
	System	10	2.9		
	Total	15	4.3		
Total		345	100.0		

Source: Own elaboration.

The Asociaciones de Madres y Padres de Alumnos (AMPA - *Students' mothers and fathers associations*) are a very adequate instrument for the inter-relation between parents and teachers. According to Sánchez Horcajo in his study on the Castilla-Rural schools, 41% of the interviewed affirmed that there was a parents association in their centres and 51% answer negatively. Even so, these associations were seen as an important means to improve and facilitate the parents-teachers relations. To us there is not a doubt (Sánchez, 1985).

We cite the case a GRC formed by small schools located in seven different municipalities with a population mean of 350 inhabitants. Well, in four of them the AMPA has almost 100% of members among their pupils' parents, whereas in the other three there is not a single mother or father related to the AMPA. According to the relate of a mother, once one is involved in one of these small municipalities where everybody knows each other, it is very difficult that the rest of the population does the same, but the complicate thing is that a father, and more generally, a mother would be the first to join. Another characteristic of the AMPA is usually the lack of involvement of many of the associates. The president of an AMPA commented: "Many parents say: yes it's nice to have an AMPA and to do stuff, but let somebody else do it".

The Education Council is another meeting point between parents and teachers. This professional organism should be for the parents, teachers and student reached agreements democratically on certain subjects, but in the every day life and the teachers' answers in the interviews we have done tell us that this is a more representative organism than it is functional:

In the Education Council there is participation, but there are not many contributions from the students or the parents, even from the teachers. The dynamic I know is that here are discussed the issues the teachers have.

The director of a rural centre told us about the Council: "it is not an example of vitalism, but it works. It should work better, but until now I have not found the way of enliven it".

In fact, in many centres it has been affirmed that they have had many difficulties at the moment of finding candidates for the Council's elections.

Another professional education organism, the faculty, seems to maintain good relations with the parents, this from the information we obtained. The differences with the urban context are imperceptible.

Table 15
Relation parents-faculty. Rural con-

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	There is no relation	1	2.1	2.3	2.3
	Good realtions	32	68.1	74.4	76.7
	Regular	10	21.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	43	91.5	100.0	
Lost	NS/NC	2	4.3		
	Syetem	2	4.3		
	Total	4	8.5		
Total		47	100.0		

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 16
Relation parents-faculty. Urban context

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	There is no relation	17	4.9	5.4	5.4
	Good realtions	227	65.8	71.8	77.2
	Regular	71	20.6	22.5	99.7
	Bad relations	1	.3	.3	100.0
	Total	316	91.6	100.0	
Lost	NS/NC	25	7.2		
	System	4	1.2		
	Total	29	8.4		
Total		345	100.0		

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 17
How should the relation parents-faculty be. Rural context

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	A strict division of competence	4	8.5	9.3	9.3
	Teachers should listen to the parents' opinions	7	14.9	16.3	25.6
	Parents and teachers should make some decisions	32	68.1	74.4	100.0
	Total	43	91.5	100.0	
Lost	NS/NC	2	4.3		
	System	2	4.3		
	Total	4	8.5		
Total		47	100.0		

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 18
How should the relation parents-faculty be. Urban context

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	A strict division of competence	24	7.0	7.3	7.3
	Teachers should listen to the parents' opinions	74	21.4	22.4	29.7
	Parents and teachers should make some decisions	232	67.2	70.3	100.0
	Total	330	95.7	100.0	
Lost	NS/NC	10	2.9		
	Sistema	5	1.4		
	Total	15	4.3		
Total		345	100.0		

Source: Own elaboration.

These are the existing relations between teachers and parents. Tables 17 and 18 show that the ideal relation should be based on the fact that the parents and teachers make some decisions (more than 70%). Another of the options: "The teachers should listen to the parents' opinion" has been chosen as 16.3% of the rural interviewed and 22.4% of the urban ones.

Conclusions

We will not insist too much in the data we obtained and we have already commented on the relations between teachers and parents, although we will recapitulate briefly. What interests us is from these taking a step forward the future of the school in the rural context.

The statistical differences we have found between the rural and urban context are not too evident at a general level, but they do have certain distinctive shades. For example, the rural teachers feel less valued by the parents than the urban ones and at the same time, they quantify the influence of the parents in 31% as "much" or "sufficient"; whereas the urban teachers do in 50.6%. There is more consensus in other aspects as scoring highly the lack of support from the families as a first order problem. There is a contrast in the complain of the interviewed teachers regarding the lack of communication with the parents, with the data obtained from the questionnaire that indicate, on one hand, in more than 50% that there is contact, at least on a monthly basis, and on the other, that almost half of the teachers are satisfied with the relations established with their pupils' parents.

Finally, we can affirm that the teachers, most of them (78%) consider that the primordial function of the parents is to "agree with the teacher and back him up".

We would like to mention a concept that is beginning to hear about more and more, and that we consider essential in every school, and, obviously in the rural one. We mean the "net school". The school would not be only the addition of its components enclosed in itself, but the product of its internal and external inter-relations. In the rural medium it has a special meaning as it has a different contextualization from the urban area, as we see at the beginning of this text, which requires an exhaustive knowledge

to adapt the curricular and non-curricular contents to the context it is located.

The education process of a student is not a bi-directional relation s/he establishes with the teacher; other social agents must also be included: fathers and mothers, culture councillors, the Mayor himself, other professionals from the zone, enterprises and associations. This way the school stops being an isolated element, and this aperture to the exterior is positive, for both those inside as well as for those outside. The aggregated centres, that as we have already mentioned, are those where the individual elements predominate, probably they correspond to the typology of the centres located the farthest from the net school; but we do not have any doubt that to walk this way would favour in the medium term the development of a rural medium that is losing scholar population at an alarming speed.

The school and the rural medium at the beginning of the XXI century, where the global and the local are superimposed creating new spaces as is the “glocal”, has a good hand hidden in the sleeve with the development of new technologies that can break the isolation and lack of access to certain resources barriers, suffered by teachers, parents and students for quite some time.

The schools from small municipalities are probably less “profitable” than those located in larger cities. We cannot deny it, however, we should not forget either that these are an important element for the settlement or the escaping of the population, as the social or sanitary services are important. All of them are more expensive per inhabitant in small population concentrations, but these are not to be eliminated for that reason. Autonomous communities as Castilla and Leon have a very large number of small municipalities whose schools are about to disappear. From here we appeal to parents, teachers, and the rest of the social actors related to the education to cooperate and coordinate among themselves in order to the rural schools remain, continue working and work with quality, the resources and attention that any student, from a small town or a big city, deserve.

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