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CONTRIBUTIONS BY MARTÍN J. SANABRIA TO THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEACHING STATE IN VENEZUELA

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Abstract

The article analyzes the contributions of Martín J. Sanabria to the consolidation of the doctrine of the Teaching State (Estado Docente) in Venezuela, based on the 1870 Decree of Free and Compulsory Public Education, enacted under the government of Antonio Guzmán Blanco. It examines the influence of thinkers such as Simón Rodríguez, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, and Cecilio Acosta on Sanabria's pedagogical ideas, as well as his decisive role in drafting the Decree. The text highlights how this legal instrument laid the foundations for free, universal, and compulsory education in the country, establishing the State as guarantor of public instruction. It concludes that this historical milestone marked the formal beginning of the Teaching State in Venezuela, with far-reaching effects on educational policies throughout the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries.

Keywords: Martín J. Sanabria; Teaching State; education in Venezuela; 1870 Decree on Public Instruction; Simón Rodríguez; Domingo Faustino Sarmiento; Cecilio Acosta; Guzmán Blanco.

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Sustainable Development Goal(s) (SDG) to which the research work is directed

4. QUALITY EDUCATION

Description

To guarantee inclusive, equitable, and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Relationship with the research objetives

This research establishes the foundations for free, universal, and compulsory education in the country, configuring the State as the guarantor of public instruction.

Direct Objective.

10. REDUCING INEQUALITIES

Description

To reduce inequality within and among countries.

Relationship with the research objetives

It is concluded that this historical milestone marked the formal beginning of the State as Educator in Venezuela, with transcendental effects on educational policies in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries.

Direct Objective.

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the contribution of Martín J. Sanabria[1] to the consolidation of the doctrine of the Teaching State in Venezuela, taking as a reference point the Decree on Free and Compulsory Education of 1870, promulgated by Guzmán Blanco and drafted by Sanabria in his capacity as Minister of Development, as well as other writings published on the subject. Our ultimate goal is to show that Sanabria's pedagogical ideology and the content of the decree are a precursor to the principle of the teaching state, which constitutes the main theoretical foundation of educational policies in Venezuela throughout the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries.

We do not intend to refer to the legal background and previous provisions relating to the subject at hand; we suggest that our readers consult the abundant bibliography on the subject, listed at the end of this paper.[2]

We want to focus our attention on the various pedagogical influences that in some way shaped Sanabria's pedagogical ideas expressed in the 1870 Decree. In particular, the writings of Simón Rodríguez, Cecilio Acosta, and Faustino Domingo Sarmiento.

The 19th century marked the beginning of pedagogical reflections framed within the new national project for Venezuela. The nascent Republic required theoretical references to carry out the task of educating new citizens, as Simón Rodríguez repeatedly stated. The challenge was considerable: to educate the Venezuelan people after a bloody war of independence. The new Venezuelan citizens, new because the Republic was new, did not have access to formal, quality education. Only a privileged few attended private or local schools and institutions to receive an education.

1 Martín José Sanabria was born to Brígida Rodríguez del Toro and Dr. Tomás José Sanabria on August 15, 1831. He began his studies at the Colegio de la Independencia, under the direction of the illustrious educator Feliciano Montenegro Colón. After obtaining his Bachelor's degree in Philosophy, Sanabria went on to the University of Caracas, renamed by Guzmán Blanco as the Central University of Venezuela in 1884. There he enrolled in the Faculty of Law in 1850 and as an intern at the law firm of Dr. Cecilio Acosta.

2 Cf. Fernández Heres, R. (1981). *Memoria de cien años. La Educación Venezolana 1830-1980;* Fernández Heres, R. (1988) *La Instrucción Pública en el Proyecto Político de Guzmán Blanco: Ideas y hechos;* Grisanti, A. (1933). *La instrucción Pública en Venezuela. Colonial Era-Independence and Early Years of the Republic-Present Day;* Grisanti, A. (1950) *Historical Summary of Public Education in Venezuela;* Mudarra, M. A. *History of Contemporary School Legislation in Venezuela;* Peñalver Bermúdez, L. (2014) *History of Venezuelan Education. Documents for study: 1687-1870;* Rodríguez, R. (Compiler) (1998) *History of Venezuelan Education*.

The nation clamored for the establishment of educational institutions in all cities, towns, and villages of the Republic. As Bigott (1998, 92) has pointed out, according to the first Code of Public Instruction, promulgated after independence in 1943, responsibility for education was shared by the central executive power and the provinces. Schools were under the jurisdiction of provincial councils, while colleges and universities were under the jurisdiction of the federal executive.

The State had to assume its role as guide and guarantor of development in all areas. It had to assume its educational function as something essential and a priority from the very beginning of the Republic. The 1864 Constitution established the principle of freedom of education and determined that the state had the right to establish effective control over all aspects of education and, in particular, the promotion of primary education throughout the national territory. It also determined that primary education should be free.[3] It is in this context that we can situate Dr. Martin José Sanabria.

Martín J. Sanabria[4] participated in the armed uprising of 1868, which was the result of an alliance between liberals and conservatives to overthrow the government of Juan Crisóstomo Falcón. For this reason, he went into exile in Curaçao, where he remained until he was called by Antonio Guzmán Blanco to join the cabinet of the new government as Minister of Development in 1870.

Sanabria was a Deputy in the National Congress (1869), Minister of Public Works (1870 and 1887), Minister Plenipotentiary to the German Empire (1875), creator of the National Directorate of Public Instruction and the Cooperation Boards, where the residents of each locality worked, Consul of Venezuela in Mexico (1883-86), Minister of the Interior (1889), Consultant to the Chancellery (1890-92), Rector of the Central University of Venezuela (1888-89), Minister of the Court of Cassation of Caracas and the states of Carabobo, Aragua, Guárico, and Miranda (1894-1901), Founding Member, Full Member (1888), and Director of the National Academy of History (1899-1901). He died in Caracas on April 11, 1904.

3 Article 14, paragraph 12: "The Nation guarantees Venezuelans... Freedom of education, which shall be protected in its entirety. The public authorities are obliged to provide free primary education and education in arts and crafts."

4 "The original surname was Hernández de Sanavria. This was used by members of the family throughout the 18th century and half of the 19th century. Dr. Tomás José Sanavria began to sign only as Sanavria, possibly as a result of the disuse of the old colonial titles and distinctions. Later, the "v" was changed to "b." This modification in the spelling of the surname was recognized by Dr. Martín J. Sanabria before the Main Public Registry on October 5, 1903, that is, one year before his death. This request was signed by him, his sons Gustavo and Eduardo, and his sister Melchorana. At that time, his sisters Brígida, married to Don Pascual Casanova, Elena, married to Don Pedro Vegas y Mendoza, and Isabel, married to José Antonio Calcaño Paniza, were still alive. We do not know the reasons that led Dr. Sanabria to make this decision. The document only states that they are doing so "for purposes that are of interest to the signatories" (Rivero, 1981, p. 5). Throughout this paper, we will always use the surname as it was established in 1903, that is, with a "b" instead of a "v."

Pedagogical ideology

> Few Venezuelans have praised the figure of Dr. Martín J. Sanabria, an educator by tradition and by nature, who approached the Venezuelan educational problem with great success. With his "Popular Lessons," he undertook a true literacy campaign. The aim was to educate not only men, but also women, the rich, the poor, the children of foreigners, and unfortunate orphans. Dr. Sanabria wanted a radical transformation of the environment, the division of labor, the development of skills, a spirit of association for all enterprises, industrial development, in short, to turn into reality a host of aspirations that had been silenced for a long time, transcendental aspirations such as individual freedom, political rights, nationality, and the fraternity of all American peoples (Lemmo, 1976, p. 81).

I begin these reflections with this text by Professor Lemmo because I believe it is only fair to recognize the work, dedication, profound pedagogical sense, and love that Martín José Sanabria developed throughout his life, until the very end, in his beloved homeland. Sanabria's pedagogical project did not appear by chance or thanks to the historical circumstances in which he lived. Long before the enactment of the 1870 Decree, he expressed in various ways his desires and concerns regarding the education of the nascent republic of Venezuela. His readings and reflections on the writings of Simón Rodríguez in particular, his friendship and intellectual correspondence with the Argentine educator and politician Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, and his friendship with his immediate teacher, Cecilio Acosta, led him to think about and propose his ideas in the field of education, and in a particular way to serve the people of Venezuela, who were eager for knowledge and education.

Manuel Rafael Rivero, one of Sanabria's main biographers, points out the interest he showed throughout his life in educational issues; according to him, it constituted

> (...) a fundamental part of the spiritual heritage he had received from his family. His father and grandfather, Doctors Tomás José Sanabria and Tomás Hernández de Sanabria, respectively, had devoted their greatest efforts to the University of Caracas. Both had been rectors of the university and for many years professors in its law faculty (1981, p. 6).

The most important educational tool used to disseminate the educational ideas set forth in the Decree was the creation of the newspaper *El Abecé*, whose first edition appeared on October 3, 1871. As stated in the newspaper's introduction, its main objective was to serve as an informative organ for the actions of the National Directorate of Primary Education; the newspaper thus became the organ for guiding, disseminating, and reactivating the ideals of free public education under the Guzmán Blanco government. In addition to Sanabria, the newspaper's main contributors included Santiago Terrero Atienza, Jesús Muñoz Tébar, Andrés A. Silva, and Pedro Toledo Bermúdez (Lemmo, 1976, p. 77). The most important text expressing

Sanabria's educational thinking is his *Lecciones Populares (Popular Lessons),* published in *El Abecé.*

In the document *Exposición de la Dirección de Instrucción Primaria (Exposition of the Directorate of Primary Education),* which sets out the motivations behind the 1870 decree, Sanabria points out that one of the government's objectives was

> (...) to promote the dissemination of knowledge, as the best guarantee of institutions, the most solid basis for stability for good governments, and the only source of all prosperity (Fernández Heres, 1981, Vol. II, pp. 888-889).

In the aforementioned exposition, Sanabria understood that primary schools were "nurses of intelligence at that age of life when the foundations of man's future fortune are laid, and true centers from which general instruction radiates" (Ibid.).

For Sanabria, there was no doubt:

> When primary schools produce an educated population capable of conscientiously exercising their political and social rights, taking charge of their own interests in the field of peaceful discussion and civilized transactions, the republic and democracy will have an impregnable strength, and military vicissitudes will have given way to a gentler and more national law of development (El Abecé, No. 3).

This text reveals Sanabria's conviction about the immediate consequences of implementing an adequate education system for the entire nation: through education, citizens will become aware of their rights, which will facilitate social cohesion as a result of the acceptance of the new social order that would be imparted through schools:

> Identical instruction gives rise to an equal society, and association in schools leads to good harmony and easy relations in political life. It is in these institutions that the greatness of civilization and the glory of nations are truly forged, and where customs are formed in a solid manner, facilitating the free play of all social interests and purposes. It can be said with complete certainty that the most important magistrate in a republic is the schoolteacher (Ibid.).

He also pointed out that

> In democratic republics, above all, the education of the people must be universal, because in them all citizens have the right to vote and be elected, and in order to know these rights and exercise them conscientiously, it is necessary to possess a certain degree of enlightenment (Fernández Heres, 1981, Vol. II, pp. 888-889).

As Portillo and Bustamante (1999, 18) point out, the 1870 Decree has a clear humanistic orientation, which favors social equality as a requirement for political stability, given that the process of socialization that takes place through education will encourage the citizens of the new nation to assume their corresponding roles and functions in society.

The educational transformation of that time was an urgent necessity. Sanabria accurately describes the reality of Venezuela in his speech on the occasion of the installation of the National Board of Primary Education, provided for in the Decree on Primary Education of June 27, 1870:

> What a metamorphosis in just 60 years. Colonial Venezuela was an obscure people, a political embryo, whose existence was known only to geographers, through the testimony of rare travelers and the scarce indigenous products that the monopoly brought to the metropolis. Its population, scattered, superstitious, and ignorant, inhabiting a vast territory, was also divided, not only because of the aristocratic hierarchies of the absolute regime, but also because of the multiple races that constituted it. Property was the monopoly of a few: slaves were traded like domestic animals; science was a kind of mysterious Freemasonry; fanaticism was carefully cultivated; trade and other industries were monopolized; guarantees were provided by the Inquisition, torture, the gallows, and censorship, according to the system of the Count de Maistre and the desolate doctrine of Hobbes; and the political regime was the absolute despotism of a Captain General across the seas, with no law other than his whim and no purpose other than to enrich himself. In a word, Venezuela was then a mixture of convent, market, and barracks.
>
> That life lasted 300 years, during which our parents were born and died like the mining populations of Africa, without air, without light, and without relations with the world; But when it seemed that the ideas, customs, and vices of servility and abjection were most deeply rooted, the numb prisoner, the pitiful specter, raised her head from the tomb, donned her armor of war, took up her spear and shield, and, fearsome as the ancient Minerva, thundered through the air with the holy cry of independence and freedom.
>
> From the bosom of that prison spring geniuses who astonish the world, consummate statesmen, eminent writers, model priests; and after 14 years of colossal struggle, Venezuela conquers its independence, dons the diadem of the Republic, and carries its redeeming arms to the ends of the country. (El Abecé, No. 3).

Furthermore, Sanabria does not hesitate to affirm that

> ... the decree on popular education is truly the beginning of a third age for Venezuela. It condenses and rewards the great sacrifices and privations of our

> long struggle and outlines the future power and authority of the democratic Republic in the civilization of the century. (Ibid.).

Influence of Simón Rodríguez

Sanabria was familiar with the writings of Simón Rodríguez. His influence was decisive in promoting a better understanding of the educational reality in Venezuela and throughout South America.

In his work *Luces y virtudes sociales* (Social Lights *and Virtues*), Rodríguez expressed his particular interest in popular education, understood as general education. The two themes—popular education and general education—constitute a single concern: the State must provide education to all citizens (popular education) and must include all the content of so-called general education, which coincides with elementary or primary education.

The need to educate the citizens of the new Republic was urgent. Sanabria was very aware of Rodríguez's thinking when he pointed out that the Republic would not progress with an ignorant population. Ignorance, therefore, was the first obstacle to overcome in this new stage of the country's development:

> Consider the functions of the first school and you will see that, for better or worse, it influences all physical, intellectual, emotional, moral, and social relationships, from the most seemingly insignificant to the most important (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 581).

In addition to indicating that the first school is the school par excellence, Rodríguez stated that the first school is the ground in which the social tree takes root. For this reason: "The undertaking of teaching must be general and constant. Its importance requires that there be teachers who are wise, skilled, irreproachable, and with a vocation for teaching" (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 586).

It must be general because "The general instruction that is required is that which provides knowledge of the obligations that man contracts by the mere fact of being born into society" (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 366).

As a consequence of the above, Simón Rodríguez proposed that the State should be responsible for early education, whose purpose would be to provide education to the entire population: "The Government should assume the functions of a common father in education and generalize instruction" (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 360). Because, through early education, people will be taught how to live (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 351).

That is why Rodríguez does not hesitate to affirm that society must "not only make education available to all, but also provide the means to acquire it, the time to acquire it, and compel people to acquire it" (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 457).

For Sanabria, these ideas had to be put into practice. Governments had to understand that elementary school is "the foundation of knowledge and the lever with which they must raise peoples to the level of civilization demanded by the century" (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 581).

Influence of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento

> The influence of the master from the South on the promoters of popular education in Venezuela is undeniable; particularly on the Minister of Development, Martín J. Sanabria, who, with the arrival of Guzmán Blanco to power, saw his hopes realized, understanding that the time had come to carry out everything he had dreamed of during his exile in Curaçao, when he read the works of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (Lemmo, 1976, p. 79).

Specifically, on March 22, 1871, Terrero Atienza, who, together with Sanabria, maintained close correspondence with Faustino Sarmiento, revealed the reality of Venezuelan education in the hope of receiving some advice from him. Sarmiento responded by pointing out the importance of popular education. For him, it was imperative to promote the supremacy of the people, and that was only possible through the education of all its members, specifically by overcoming illiteracy (Lemmo, 1976, p. 78).

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-1888) wrote a letter to Sanabria on April 9, 1872, in which he says:

> The idea you express that it [popular education] bridges the gap between the conquering minority and the popular majority, which is no longer indigenous, would be enough to secure you a distinguished place among American thinkers... I was pleased to learn that, in your free time from the tedious s of politics, you were studying ways to popularize easy reading methods (Armas Chitty, 1957). [5]

In his book *Educación popular* (*Popular Education*), Sarmiento argues that since the French Revolution, the principle has been established, applied to all men, "to be considered sufficiently intelligent for the management of public affairs, through the exercise of the right to vote" (1849, p. 14). From this principle, Sarmiento deduced the duty of every government to provide education to the future generation of the nascent American republics. He added:

5 The reference to Sanabria's idea of popular education refers to the text published in ABECË entitled "Lecciones Populares" (Popular Lessons), which was written by Sanabria (Lemmo, 1976, p. 80).

> The dignity of the State, the glory of a Nation, can no longer be measured, therefore, except by the dignity of the condition of its subjects; and this dignity cannot be obtained except by elevating moral character, developing intelligence, and predisposing it to the orderly and legitimate action of all the faculties of man (p. 15). We cannot forget, says Sarmiento, that the masses "are less inclined to respect life and property as their reason and moral sentiments are less cultivated" (ibid.).

Human dignity is therefore based on moral conduct, the development of intelligence, and the harmonious growth of human faculties. This observation had a profound impact on Sanabria's thinking, who, due to his education, understood very well what this meant.

Sarmiento continues:

> Morality is produced in the masses by the ease of obtaining means of subsistence, by cleanliness that elevates the feeling of personal dignity, and by the culture of the spirit that prevents them from indulging in ignoble dissipation and the brutalizing vice of drunkenness; and the sure and infallible means of achieving these results is to provide education to children, since we are not able to give adults the same benefits (p. 24).

That is why

> Children's attendance at school has the moralizing effect of absorbing a part of their time that would otherwise be wasted in idleness and neglect; accustoming the spirit to the idea of regular, continuous duty, giving it habits of regularity in its operations; adding another authority to that of the father, which does not always have a constant effect on children's morals, thus beginning to form the spirit to the idea of an authority outside the family; Finally, the gathering of large numbers of individuals, the need to restrain their passions among themselves, and the opportunity to strengthen bonds of sympathy, lay the first rudiments of morality and sociability so necessary to prepare them for the obligations and duties of adult life; These are the indirect influences which, as far as the most immediate ones are concerned, the preceding documents and observations reveal in all their extent (p. 24).

Sanabria shares Sarmiento's view when he states that

> Public education has become a right of the governed, an obligation of the government, and an absolute necessity for society, directly remedying the negligence of parents by forcing them to educate their children or providing resources to those who, without voluntarily refusing to do so, find themselves unable to educate their children (p. 26).

Sarmiento's influence in Venezuela, the rest of South America, and the United States was significant. He himself acknowledges his contributions:

> I truly believe that I have had the good fortune to have started a movement that was destined to be universal, as can currently be seen in England, France, etc. It was not so in the United States itself, and I contributed to its generalization by petitioning for the creation of the Department of Education No. 1 in Washington (Armas Chitty, 1957).

Lemmo recalls that in a letter Sanabria had sent to Sarmiento in November 1871, he thanked him for the help he had given Venezuela and informed him of the success that Sarmiento's book entitled "Las Escuelas, base de la prosperidad de los Estados Unidos de Norte América" (Schools, the basis of the great prosperity of the United States of America) had achieved in the country (1976, pp. 80-81).

López comments that:

> The Western Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries, through philosophical liberalism and, in general, the ideas of the Enlightenment, raised the urgency of formal education for the majority and the need to achieve the goal of universal, popular, free, and compulsory education; an official education guided by the government. It was necessary to train free citizens in democratic states, in need of unity in their respective nations. Since then, education has been considered a necessary source for promoting national unity, the natural cohesion of people who share a common past, and the formation of citizens who are aware of their rights and obligations. Taking into account the above considerations on official education for the majority, Sarmiento was concerned during his presidential term with making primary education compulsory for the Argentine people (2000).

In Argentina, Law 1420 was enacted on July 8, 1884, establishing common, free, and compulsory primary education. In Venezuela, the Decree on Free and Compulsory Public Education had been enacted fourteen years earlier, on June 27, 1870.

Influence of Cecilio Acosta

Parra Márquez (1977, p. 430) reminds us that Martín J. Sanabria, after completing his high school studies, entered the University of Caracas and enrolled in the Faculty of Law in 1850. At that time, Cecilio Acosta was teaching law students. It was there, amid the hustle and bustle of academic life, that Acosta and Sanabria met. The former always had a special fondness for the latter because he recognized the sincerity of his behavior and the depth of his thinking. For this reason, he invited him to work in his law firm. They were often seen walking together as they left

his house, located on the block between the corners of Velásquez and Santa Rosalía, heading toward the city center and engaged in cordial conversation on various topics. Parra Márquez also stated, that Sanabria was always consistent, especially during the most difficult moments in his former professor's life.

Acosta was not a systematic educator. His ideas and contributions in the field of education did not come so much from his experience in university classrooms, but rather from his training and the depth of his thinking. His main pedagogical ideas are expressed in the book *Cosas sabidas y cosas por saberse* (Things Known and Things to Be Known), published in 1856.

In this text, written in epistolary style, Acosta comments on various topics of current interest in that historical period: the reintegration of Gran Colombia, political tolerance, the social, cultural, and economic situation of the country, and, in particular, the state of Venezuelan education: elementary, secondary, and university education. Acosta proposes reorienting the objectives of education in Venezuelan schools.

Acosta was in favor of promoting the expansion of primary or basic education. He was convinced that only an educated people could be free. We can say with certainty that he was a "teacher, a vehement exponent of those concepts that, in his opinion, could contribute to progress, public peace, and the regeneration of the Venezuelans of his time" (Sambrano, O. 1979, p. 74).

Acosta's pedagogical thinking is based on the following statement:

> Teaching must go from the bottom up, and not the other way around, as is customary among us, because it does not achieve its goal, which is the dissemination of knowledge. Nature, which knows more than society and should be our guide, gives each person, in general, the gifts they need for the social tasks related to their existence: to be a parent, citizen, or industrialist. Hence the need for elementary instruction, which nurtures these gifts, and the kind of miracle that can be seen in their development (Acosta, 1856, p. 8).

For Acosta, the first challenge of an organized society must be elementary education. In this area, the main objective is literacy. Therefore, the educational process must focus on reading and writing, which Acosta considers to be the basic tool of instruction, where it should begin: "There is no doubt: those who long to achieve happiness must live with the human race; and in order not to be, even in the midst of it, an outcast, they must possess its thinking, that is, be able to read and write" (Acosta, 1856, pp. 8-9). Reading and writing are not only activities learned in school, but must be assumed as the gateway through which we reach the intimacy of the human being. This is one of the issues that Sanabria understood perfectly, pointing out the importance of teaching reading and writing from elementary school onwards.

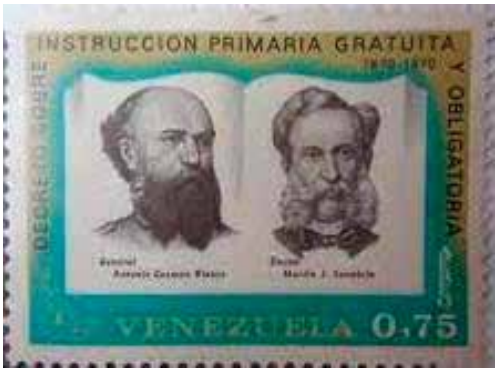
One of Cecilio Acosta's most important contributions to education is that of unlimited education, since an educated society is a guarantee of progress. Unlimited education implies the concept of progress in education. Progress was one of the central concerns in Cecilio Acosta's life; it was the goal of all political, intellectual, technical, and, of course, educational efforts.

However, it is necessary to expand popular education, and to do so, it must be decentralized:

> so that it is for everyone; let us give it another direction, so that it does not lead to misery; let us remove the rust and the formality, to make it brand new and popular; let us ensure that it is rational, so that it is understood, and that it is useful so that it is sought after. The means of enlightenment should not pile up like clouds, remaining in the upper spheres, but should descend like rain to moisten all the fields (Acosta, 1856, pp. 16-17).

Acosta believes that the improvement and advancement of the poor classes and their rise to a higher level of social and political life will remove the obstacles that limit the legitimate physical, moral, economic, intellectual, and legal freedom of citizens. This position forces him to venture into the subject of education, since in his opinion the country "has much to gain or lose depending on the direction taken by the education of young people" (Complete Works, vol. I, p. 72) and for this reason he proposes a change in its orientation, directing it "towards objectives of known utility" (Ibid., p. 74). He raised this issue in 1847 when the reform of Laws II and III of the Public Education Code was being planned (Fernández Heres, 1985).

Drafting of the Decree



The emergence of free, compulsory public education in Venezuela dates back to the second half of the 19th century. It was not an isolated phenomenon, but part of a worldwide movement.

In France, in particular, there were movements that promoted debate on this issue, which was considered an achievement and an ideal of the time. In the United States, legislation on state-funded compulsory education began in 1875, and in the other countries of the Southern Cone, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's ideas on public education, as mentioned above, spread throughout the continent (Govea de Carpio, 1990, pp. 23–24).

In Venezuela, a group of prominent figures embraced the new ideas that grew and evolved in the heat of the great federal social revolution. Among the most notable were Martín J. Sanabria, Santiago Terrero Atienza, Jesús Muñoz, and Juan Bautista Dalla-Costa.

The drafting of the Decree-[6] (Decree-Law on the Establishment of the Republic of Venezuela) was the work of Sanabria, according to his own testimony and that of various historians who have studied this historical period. In addition to the text cited by Venezuelan historian Angelina Lemmo, we can point to Parra Márquez (1977), who stated that:

6 The immediate antecedent of the Decree was Article 14, No. 12 of the 1864 Constitution, which established the obligation to offer free primary education and arts and crafts education: "Freedom of education shall be protected in its entirety. The public authorities are obliged to establish free primary education and arts and crafts education."

> Guzmán Blanco knew full well that, in order to put his ideas into practice, he needed a man of ability and insight, and he rightly set his sights on Martín J. Sanabria, who did not limit himself to simply supporting the project; on the contrary, he breathed new life into it and, by contributing his own ideas and concepts, made it more accessible and adaptable to our idiosyncrasies and environmental circumstances, as demonstrated by the text of the Decree, in the drafting of which he played a decisive role. Guzmán Blanco himself rightly compared Sanabria to one of the highest peaks of American thought, the Argentine Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, and in a widely circulated letter he said that when our compatriots saw a school for primary education in every municipality or parish dedicated to the task of eradicating ignorance, the name of Dr. Sanabria would be ennobled (p. 431)**.**

Santos Urriola reaffirmed the above by saying that:

> Before Guzmán's victory, Dr. Martín J. Sanabria developed a project with deep Venezuelan content in Curaçao. (...) Thus, in Curaçao, he studied, thought, took notes, reviewed, and wrote. And in this way, in Sanabria's impeccable English handwriting, the substance of the Decree on Free and Compulsory Public Education that Guzmán Blanco would promulgate on June 27, 1870, would take shape (1981, p. 70).

Tomás Polanco, in his work on Guzmán Blanco, says that:

> For a man of Guzmán's intellectual background, it was obvious that any fundamental political reform would fail if a high percentage of the population remained ignorant. For this reason, when Dr. Martín J. Sanabria, almost immediately after the triumph of April 1870, presented his ideas on the matter, he immediately ordered that the draft decree, prepared with patience and talent by Sanabria himself, be considered by the Cabinet in order to establish free and compulsory primary education in the country (1992, p. 613).

Fernández Heres (1985) points out that:

> With the priority that the ruler gave to education, the principle of mental renewal was established, underpinned by the educational interests of Martín J. Sanabria, who, invigorated by the ideas of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, a figure he greatly admired, and also reinforced by Antonio Leocadio Guzmán, the father of the idea of the stamp to finance the educational project, spared no effort to make the universalization of basic education a reality.

Undoubtedly, the best testimony can be found in Sanabria himself when he recalls, in his letter to Dr. H. Antich, where he explains the origin of the decree and its authorship:

The Primary Education Decree was conceived and almost drafted by me in Curaçao at the end of 1869, inspired by the works of Don Faustino R. Sarmiento, which I read with pleasure and meditated on calmly during the long days of exile. At that time, I did not intend to become Minister of Public Works, but I did consider myself entitled to present my compatriots with a project of common utility. Called upon after the triumph of the revolution to serve as Minister of Public Works, I proposed as an urgent measure the Decree on the amortization of censuses, which was enacted in the first half of May 1870, and then I took charge of popular education, using only my notes from Curaçao to draft the Decree. At that time, the President was in Carabobo directing the Western campaign or the siege of Puerto Cabello, and the government that had remained in Caracas barely had time to attend to matters of public order, the demands of war, the Treasury's difficulties, and diplomatic complications. Nevertheless, as I was convinced that my contribution was insignificant and unnecessary to overcome the resistance of our opponents, I worked in the department under my charge as if the country were at peace, without worrying about the dangers of the situation, in order to make the most of my activity in matters of common utility. For better or worse, my work was completed by the time the President returned, and my first step had to be to explore the opinion of that magistrate, as he exercised the dictatorship and nothing was done without his will. In fact, I took the first opportunity to speak to him, first giving him a summary of the decree and the general plan for the new institution, and then reading him the fundamental provisions. He listened to me with pleasure and interest and ended by telling me to report on the matter to the Cabinet, which was almost equivalent to approval of the project. Encouraged by the President's favorable reception of my work, I put it in my briefcase and took it to the Council of Ministers in those days; but as events gave no respite, and matters of public works, not being urgent, were delayed, I decided to consult in particular the opinion of my colleagues, Messrs. Antonio Leocadio Guzmán, General José Ignacio Pulido, Dr. Diego Bta. Urbaneja, Jacinto Gutiérrez, and Dr. Francisco Pimentel y Roth, who accepted the idea and, with some modifications, offered me their vote and cooperation. With the file thus substantiated and on the eve of the President's departure for Carabobo, he submitted a resolution on the primary education project to the Cabinet; and after it had been read again and actually approved, I asked the President to publish it. This is the true history of the Decree of June 27, 1870, on popular education, and the people I have mentioned can testify to this. I am far from believing that this Decree is a perfect work; apart from the fact that the most advanced nations have not yet had their final say on this or any other matter, the subject was new to us, resources were scarce, and the country's conditions were exceptional; even so, and with all its flaws, no one can deny that the great principle of compulsory primary education free of charge has been established (Cf. Rivero, 1981, pp. 12 and 13).[7]

7 In addition to the authors cited, we can mention Oscar Sambrano, *Venezuelan Educators;* Leonardo Carvajal, *200 Venezuelan Educators. 18th-21st Centuries* and *Who Did What in Education?;* Miguel Ángel Mudarra, *History of Contemporary School Legislation in Venezuela* and *Profiles of Venezuelan Educators.*

To conclude this idea, we transcribe a text by Parra Márquez that sufficiently expresses what has been stated above:

> (...) the Decree of June 27, 1870, was a civilizing step; it was the unwavering determination to push Venezuela toward a promising future; to set it on the path of progress without hesitation; along the clear paths marked by the light of reason and, for that reason, it was a triumph for the government of Guzmán Blanco and his Minister Martín J. Sanabria for the iron will they put at the service of the creative idea (Parra Márquez, p. 431).

Elements of the doctrine of the Teaching State expressed in the Decree

We now intend to highlight the main ideas of the Decree that express the doctrine of the Teaching State, even in its early stages, if we may say so. The decree, as we have stated before, is a precursor to the content that would later be developed in Venezuela in relation to the doctrine of the Teaching State.[8]

Before the enactment of the Decree, only municipal public schools existed in Venezuela. As Grisanti (1950, p. 125) recalls, Guzmán Blanco's Decree created federal schools, whose scope of implementation covered the entire country.

It is from the enactment of the 1870 Decree, as Carvajal (2009, p. 115) states, that the teaching state in Venezuela was born, "if by this we mean mainly the obligation of the National Public Power to provide for the education of the people."

This same author considers that, since the drafting and enactment of the Decree,

> Venezuelan educational history was divided into two. With it, the teaching state was born in practice, understanding the core of this concept to be the obligation assumed by the national executive branch to take responsibility for popular education, a task that until then had been attributed to weak and impoverished municipalities (Carvajal, 2014, p. 112).

Prieto Figueroa, however, in his book *El Estado y la Educación en América Latina* (The State and Education in Latin America, 2007), states that the first practical manifestation of the doctrine of the teaching state in Venezuela took place during the colonial period, in the

We have changed the spelling of some words, which were formerly written differently, to make the text easier to read.

8 "Many of the innovative aspects of the Decree of June 27, 1870, were not actually entirely new. A good part of them were already contemplated in the decrees and resolutions of the Sovereign State of Guayana and in the 1869 draft law on public education" (Govea De Carpio, 1990, p. 29).

18th century, under the influence of the ideas of the French Revolution and the American Revolution. The first Venezuelan Constitution (1811) recognizes in its General Provisions the teaching function of the State, assigning its exercise to regional governments, in particular, the care of indigenous peoples, who had been neglected in previous years and centuries. With the triumph of the Federal Revolution, in addition to proclaiming freedom of education, the National Constitution of 1864 established the duty of the public authorities to provide free primary education and arts and crafts training. Despite this, it was not until the Decree of 1870 that the doctrine of the Teaching State was offered as the guiding principle of educational policy in Venezuela.

However, as Márquez Rodríguez points out:

> Another interesting aspect of the way in which the Decree instituted compulsory and free education was the definition of the State as the institution directly and immediately responsible for popular education. This completes the legal-educational figure of the teaching state, which, as we have seen, began to take shape from the moment the first victories in the struggle for independence were achieved and the organization of the republican state began (2009, p. 68).

The Decree "created a magnificent environment, centralized authority to manage educational issues, and gave it a solid foundation" (Luque, G., 2001, p. 124).

It should be added that:

> The decree established the national government's responsibility to provide free education up to the fourth grade of primary school and provided the National Directorate of Public Instruction with specific and untouchable funds for this purpose. The immediate results were undeniable: in just 17 years, from 1870 to 1887, Venezuela went from a gross enrollment rate of 0.9% to 4.7%; and from the 182 federal schools we had when Martín J. Sanabria took over the Ministry of Development, we went to 1,327 in 1887 (Carvajal, L. 2014, p. 112).

Polanco reports that:

> "When Guzmán left power in 1887, there were 1,949 primary schools throughout the country, with a total of 97,468 students, meaning that the number of students had increased twenty-threefold and the number of schools sixteenfold" (1992, p. 609).

The recitals of the Decree establish:

1. That all members have the right to participate in the transcendental benefits of education.

2. That it is necessary in republics to ensure the exercise of citizens' rights and the fulfillment of their duties.

3. That primary education must be universal, given that it is the basis of all further knowledge and moral perfection, and

4. That, under the federal Constitution, the public authorities must provide primary education free of charge.

The above therefore implies: that every citizen has the right to receive education; that education is the means by which the Republic ensures the exercise, which has become a duty, of civic rights and duties; that education must encompass all citizens of the Republic because it is a necessary condition for the development of individuals; that primary education provided in state institutions shall be completely free for all citizens.

Let us now highlight the innovative ideas in the Decree that can be considered the immediate antecedents of the doctrine of the Teaching State.

Title I: General Provisions, Articles 1 and 2 contain the fundamental provision of the Decree: there are two types of education, compulsory and voluntary. Compulsory education is required for all Venezuelans of both sexes, and public authorities have a duty to provide it free of charge and on a preferential basis. It shall cover the general principles of morality, reading and writing in Spanish, practical arithmetic, the metric system, and the Compendium of the Federal Constitution.

The main difference between the two types of education mentioned above is that compulsory education covers the subjects already mentioned , while voluntary education covers other knowledge that Venezuelans wish to acquire in the various fields of human knowledge (Article 3).

The following articles of the decree (6 to 10) set out the main provisions relating to the subject under consideration: the State's power to enact laws and regulations relating to primary education; the State's obligation to promote primary education and free schools; the establishment of the National Directorate of Primary Education; and the support that the State will give to all efforts made to establish primary education.

Title II: On the protection afforded by the federal government to primary education, establishes in Article 1 the protection that the State will give to primary education through the agencies created for the implementation of the Decree: National Directorate of Primary Education; Departmental Boards; Parish Boards; Neighborhood Boards; and Popular Cooperative Societies of both sexes.

In Article 2, the Decree lists the 22 powers and responsibilities of the National Directorate of Primary Education. This expressly states the State's role in directing and promoting primary education. Among these, those relating to directly pedagogical issues stand out: the selection of school textbooks and the determination of the teaching methods to be applied in schools; establishment of a periodical publication promoting primary education (this power was immediately put into practice with the creation of the newspaper *El Abecé* in December 1871); maintaining correspondence with those who promote primary education in other countries in order to learn about advances in this level of education; and promoting the relevant measures in the states to achieve universal primary education in the country as soon as possible.

Articles 8 to 12 establish the powers of the Superior Boards, Departmental Boards, Parish Boards, Neighborhood Boards, and Cooperative Societies, which can be interpreted as a preview of what the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela would establish in 1999 by including the principle of active and leading participation by communities. Starting with Article 18, the Decree focuses its attention on primary schools.

In short, based on this Decree, the State assumes the functions of promotion, direction, control, and management of primary education institutions throughout the territory of the Republic. This is a direct antecedent of the doctrine of the Teaching State, which is still in force in Venezuela today.

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