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MAIN EDUCATION PROJECT FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: REVERBERATIONS ON LATIN AMERICAN EDUCATION¹

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ABSTRACT: This article derives from a study that investigated the reverberation of the ideas brought forth by the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean on educational and curricular policies for Brazilian, Chilean, and Uruguayan elementary education. The methodological path was outlined based on documentary research with discourse analysis while taking into account the contexts of influence and text production of the statements, opinions, and reports with regard to the Project. The study results indicated that: 1) this project has guided the course of educational reforms that took place in Latin American countries, such as Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay; 2) the discussions and debates for the transformations of Latin American elementary education in the context of the project were based on a conception of education and development anchored in a humanist and educational perspective of labor; and, finally, 3) the 1980s were the foundation and development phase of the project's first activities, aiming to the quantitative expansion of elementary education, particularly in the number of enrollments, whereas the 1990s intensified the activities of the project with a major focus on the quality of education, via management and curriculum changes. The conclusion was that the ideas of the Main Education Project reverberated in the three countries studied as they have incorporated—and still do—the principles and objectives of the project in their respective educational and curricular policies, while engendering a kind of consensus among the educational and curriculum policies fostered in Latin America.

Keywords: Main Education Project, Elementary Education, Educational Policies, Latin America.

PROJETO PRINCIPAL DE EDUCAÇÃO PARA A AMÉRICA LATINA E O CARIBE: REPERCUSSÕES NA EDUCAÇÃO LATINOAMERICANA

RESUMO: Este artigo é resultado de um estudo que investigou as repercussões das ideias produzidas a partir do Projeto Principal de Educação para a América Latina e o Caribe, nas políticas educacionais e

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curriculares para a educação básica brasileira, chilena e uruguaia. O percurso metodológico delineou-se como pesquisa documental, com análise de discurso, considerando os contextos de influência e produção de texto das declarações, pareceres e relatórios referentes ao Projeto. Os resultados da pesquisa indicaram que: 1) esse projeto orientou os rumos das reformas educacionais ocorridas em países da América Latina, como o Brasil, o Chile e o Uruguai; 2) as discussões e debates para as transformações da educação básica latino-americana, no contexto do projeto, fundamentaram-se em uma concepção de educação e desenvolvimento ancorada em uma perspectiva humanista e educativa do trabalho; e, por fim, 3) a década de 1980 foi a fase de fundação e desenvolvimento das primeiras ações do projeto, com vistas à expansão quantitativa da educação básica, especialmente quanto ao número de matrículas, enquanto que, na década de 1990, foram intensificadas as ações do projeto, com vistas, principalmente, à qualidade da educação, por meio de transformações na gestão e no currículo. Concluiu-se que o Projeto Principal de Educação teve suas ideias repercutidas nos três países pesquisados, à medida que os mesmos incorporaram, e ainda incorporam, os princípios e objetivos do projeto em suas respectivas políticas educacionais e curriculares, engendrando uma espécie de consenso entre as políticas educacionais e curriculares promovidas na América Latina.

Palavras-chave: Projeto Principal de Educação, Educação Básica, Políticas educacionais, América Latina.

PROYECTO PRINCIPAL DE EDUCACIÓN EN AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE: ECOS EN LA EDUCACIÓN LATINOAMERICANA

RESUMEN: Este artículo surge de un estudio que investigó las repercusiones de las ideas producidas a partir del Proyecto Principal de Educación en América Latina y el Caribe en las políticas educativas y curriculares de la educación básica brasileña, chilena y uruguaya. El enfoque metodológico se planteó a partir de la investigación documental, con análisis del discurso, considerando los contextos de influencia y producción textual de las declaraciones, opiniones e informes relativos al proyecto. Los resultados de la investigación indicaron que: 1) este proyecto orientó el curso de las reformas educativas que tuvieron lugar en países latinoamericanos, como Brasil, Chile y Uruguay; 2) las discusiones y debates para las transformaciones de la educación básica latinoamericana en el contexto del proyecto se sustentaron en una concepción de la educación y el desarrollo anclada en una perspectiva humanista y educativa del trabajo; y, finalmente, 3) los 80's han sido la fase de fundación y desarrollo de las primeras acciones del proyecto, con miras a la expansión cuantitativa de la educación básica, especialmente en el número de matrículas, mientras que los 90's intensificaron las acciones del proyecto, enfocadas, principalmente, en la calidad de la educación, a través de cambios en la gestión y en el currículo. Se concluyó que el Proyecto Principal de Educación tuvo sus ideas reflejadas en los tres países investigados en la medida en que incorporaron y aún incorporan los principios y objetivos del proyecto en sus respectivas políticas educativas y curriculares, generando algo de consenso entre las políticas educativas y curriculares impulsadas en Latinoamérica.

Palabras clave: Proyecto Principal de Educación, Educación Básica, Políticas Educativas, América Latina.

INTRODUCTION

The historical and objective conditions that marked the last two decades of the 20th century, the period in which the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean, the object of analysis of this article, was created, favored the development and incorporation of political, ideological

and economic actions, with the perspective of reforming basic education, especially in countries that make up, geopolitically, the Latin American region such as Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay.

These three countries, historically, in their respective processes of reformulating educational and curricular policies, at the time with an emphasis on basic education, incorporated and reproduced many of the ideas and ideals produced and disseminated, mainly under the tutelage of international institutions, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank. Such ideas and ideals still reverberate in the educational reforms of the 21st century (KRAWCZYK; VIEIRA, 2012). The implementation of this educational reform process did not happen spontaneously. Multiple actions were set in motion, among them, the creation of the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean, the object of analysis in this article.

The idea of developing a Main Education Project that would guide educational and curricular reforms within Latin American countries began in 1979, when UNESCO², in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Organization of American States (OAS), convened “[...] a conference of ministers of education and ministers in charge of economic planning, to identify the problems of education in the region and develop a 'main' project that has as its horizon the 2000s [...]” (UNESCO, 2001, p. 8). According to UNESCO (2001), it was at this conference, held in Mexico City, that the Declaration of Mexico (1979) was approved, which supports the foundations for the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean.

To outline strategies, recommendations, and guidance for the implementation and execution of the Main Education Project in Latin America, many documents emerged from intergovernmental ministerial meetings, such as the Regional Conferences of Ministers of Education and Ministers in Charge of Economic Planning of Member States of Latin America and the Caribbean (MINEDLAC)³ and the Meetings of the Intergovernmental Regional Committee of the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean (PROMEDLAC). These meetings gave rise to several documents, which we highlight: the *Declaración de Ciudad de México* (1979); *Recomendación de Quito* (1981); *Recomendación de Santa Lúcia* (1982); *Declaración de Bogotá* (1987); *Declaración de Guatemala* (1989); *Declaración de Quito* (1991); *Declaración de Santiago* (1993); *Recomendación de Kingston* (1996).

As a political, economic, and, mainly, educational project, specific to countries in the Latin American region, the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean had, and still has, an important role in the movement toward understanding educational policies and curricula developed in recent years by South American countries, including Brazil, Chile and Uruguay.

We can highlight that, to the reference of principles and guidelines incorporated into such declarations and recommendations, as a basis for the development of educational policies in Latin American countries, other international conferences and documents on education were added: the World Education Conference for All, in 1990, held in Jomtien in Thailand, which culminated in the “World Declaration of Education for All: meeting basic learning needs” (UNESCO, 1998a); the report

² Noma (2011, p. 106) suggests that, in terms of educational matters, until the 1980s, UNESCO was the institution that operated predominantly in Latin America, as “[...] a laboratory of ideas, of generation of consensus and setting standards, acting as a central disseminating forum for the Latin American and Caribbean region of principles and guidelines general for education”.

³ Other meetings were held: MINEDLAC VI, in Bogotá (1987); MINEDLAC VII, in Kingston (1996) (UNESCO, 2001).

“Education a treasure to discover: report to UNESCO from the International Commission on Education for the 21st century”, coordinated by Jacques Delors.

If in the 80s, the purpose of educational policies was “[...] quantitative expansion of education [...] in the 90s the central axis is the quality of education and, particularly, the quality of system management” (UNESCO, 1998b, p. 21). In this sense, in the 1990s: “Educational reforms, accompanied by large investments in education, and centered on curricular and management transformation, constitute the scenario in which UNESCO's action takes place” (UNESCO, 1998b, p. 21).

Given this context, this article⁴ aimed to analyze the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean and its repercussions on educational and curricular policies for basic education in South American countries, based on the historical conditions of the two last decades of the 20th century.

To achieve this objective, the article was organized into two subsections: in the first, a brief historical contextualization of the development of the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean during the 1980s was presented, highlighting its objectives, principles, and strategies for basic education, through its main milestones. This period was characterized as a stage of foundation and the first actions of the Main Education Project in Latin America, with a view to the quantitative expansion of education (UNESCO, 1998b). In the second subsection, some milestones of the Main Education Project throughout the 1990s were presented, emphasizing the third specific objective of the project, incorporated into the Quito Recommendation of 1981: improving the quality and efficiency of systems educational, through carrying out the necessary reforms (UNESCO-OREALC, 1981). According to UNESCO (1998), the focus of actions within the scope of the Main Education Project, from the 90s onwards, was intensified towards the development of “[...] quality of education and, particularly, the quality system management” (UNESCO, 1998b, p. 21). According to UNESCO (1998b, p. 21), in the 90s, “[...] educational reforms, accompanied by large investments in education, and centered on curricular and management transformation, constitute the scenario in which the UNESCO action is developed” (UNESCO, 1998b, p. 21).

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The results highlighted in this study were collected primarily from documentary sources - statements, opinions, reports, among others - resulting mainly from intergovernmental meetings, organized and promoted within the scope of the Main Education Project actions, coordinated by the Intergovernmental Regional Education Major Project Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Thus, among the selected documents, the following were analyzed: the *Declaración de Ciudad de México*, published in 1979, which resulted from discussions and ideas generated at MINEDLAC V, held in 1979 in Mexico City (UNESCO-OREALC, 1979); *Recomendación de Quito*, resultante da *Reunión regional intergubernamental sobre los objetivos, las estrategias y las modalidades de acción de un Proyecto principal en la*

⁴ The results presented in this study represent syntheses of research that investigated physical education and sport, in the context of educational and curricular policies for Brazilian, Chilean and Uruguayan basic education. This research is entitled “Educational and curricular policies in Brazil, Chile and Uruguay: specificities of physical education and sport in basic education” (“*Políticas educacionais e curriculares no Brasil, Chile e Uruguai: especificidades da educação física e do esporte na educação básica*”) and is linked to the Postgraduate Program in Education (PPE) at the State University of Maringá (UEM) and the Research and Studies Group on Education, Policy and Pedagogical Practice of Body Culture (GEPPECC-*Grupo de Pesquisas e Estudos em Educação, Política e Prática Pedagógica da Cultura Corporal*). The completed research is available in full for consultation at the link: <http://www.ppe.uem.br/dissertacoes.htm>.

esfera de la educación en la región de América Latina y el Caribe, held in 1981 in the city of Quito, in Ecuador (UNESCO-OREALC, 1981; 1982); among other pertinent documents.

The Main Education Project was adopted as the object of study of this article, given the relevance of the analysis of its guidelines, principles, and orientations corroborates the understanding of educational policies for basic education in Latin America, especially in the 80s/90s.

The repercussion of the guidelines, principles, and orientations of the Main Education Project in Latin American countries was exemplified here, based on educational reforms put into action by South American governments, specifically Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. The government actions carried out by its representatives, at the time, contributed to the guidelines arising from the declarations, opinions, and reports, resulting from the various intergovernmental meetings, incorporated into their educational policies.

The analyses were developed from a historical and critical perspective, based on the interpretations of Paulo Netto (2011), aiming to understand the object of study in the context of social, economic, and political relations. Furthermore, considering the documentary sources, the analyses were also based on the indications and interpretations of Shiroma, Campos, and Garcia (2005), regarding the model of understanding educational policies, based on the contexts of influence, of text production and practice. Specifically, the contexts of influence and the context of text production were considered: the first, as it is the context in which the construction of policy begins and discourses are constructed; and the second, because, according to the authors, the discourses contained in political texts express narratives that represent the projects intended in educational policies. In this sense, we chose to analyze the speeches contained in the documents – understood as units of analysis –, which corroborated the movement towards understanding the Main Education Project as a political and ideological project, to develop basic education in Latin American countries.

The authors who guided the discussions are Leher (1999), Casassus (2001), Bandeira (2002), Boron (2007), Harvey (2008), Noma (2011), Krawczyk and Vieira (2012), Barbieri (2018), among other scholars.

THE MAIN EDUCATION PROJECT FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: 1980s

The last two decades of the 20th century, the period in which the Main Education Project was established, was marked by a historical context of political redemocratization in some Latin American countries. This is a period of economic, political, and social crisis characterized by an increase in external debt and flight of foreign and national capital. Furthermore, there was an increase in inflation rates, a decline in industrial production, social inequality, and high estimates of poverty and extreme poverty rates in Latin America (LEHER, 1999; BANDEIRA, 2002; BORON, 2003; DEITOS, 2010; NOMA, 2011).

This period was also marked, more strongly, by the advancement of neoliberal ideas to other countries, both Latin American countries and other regions of the globe. According to Moraes (2001), this advance occurred in countries such as England, the United States of America, Bolivia, Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, and Uruguay. Neoliberal ideas initially influenced the economic and social policies developed in the Chilean context, around the 1970s (MORAES, 2001; NARBONDO, 2012).

Regarding the social conditions of Education, during this period, a disheartening scenario emerged: “[...] the presence in the region of 45 million illiterates out of an adult population of 159 million; excessive dropout rate in the first years of school [...]” (UNESCO-OREALC, 1979). This scenario of economic, political, social, and educational crisis opened space for the creation of the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean, whose actions were developed from 1981 to the 2000s and still have repercussions today (UNESCO, 1998; NOMA, 2011).

The Main Education Project emerged during the fifth Regional Conference of Ministers of Education and Ministers in Charge of Economic Planning of the Member States of Latin America and the Caribbean (MINEDLAC V), held in Mexico City in 1979, promoted and organized by UNESCO

with the cooperation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC) and the Organization of American States (OAS)⁵.

One of the main objectives of MINEDLAC V was to address issues relating to educational policies in the 1980s such as: linking education to economic and cultural development; encouraging the movement to democratize education; in addition to issues relating to “[...] sub-regional, regional and international cooperation for the development of education in Latin America and the Caribbean, the perspective of sub-regional and regional integration and the new world economic order (UNESCO, 1980, p. 3).

The Main Education Project would only be definitively approved in 1981 during the 21st Meeting of the UNESCO General Conference (UNESCO, 1998), when it became a strategy for the development of regional policy to guide educational and curricular policies, in the particularity of each country in Latin America and the Caribbean. The coordination of the actions developed within the scope of the Main Education Project was the responsibility of the Regional Intergovernmental Committee of the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean (PROMEDLAC).

This committee was established, on an interim basis, in 1981, during the 113th Meeting of the UNESCO Executive Council, and was effectively created as a permanent committee, later, during the 22nd General Conference of UNESCO, held in 1983 (UNESCO-OREALC, 1982). Among the objectives of this committee, was the evaluation and establishment of priorities to achieve the objectives within the scope of the Main Education Project (UNESCO, 2001).

The Main Education Project had its actions developed over the last 20 years of the 20th century to increase an education project that would also affect subsequent periods. During the late 20th century, the objectives of the Main Education Project were a reference for decision-making in Latin American countries, regarding education, especially at a basic level. Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay are among these countries. In the words of UNESCO (2001, p. 5, our translation): “For 20 years, the project objectives have been a reference for decision-making in the field of education”. Our understanding is that this demonstrates that, in the last decades of the 20th century, there was the construction of a Globally Structured Agenda for Latin American countries (BARBIERI, 2018).

Chart 1 shows some of the important milestones for the elaboration and consolidation of the Main Education Project, specifically during the 1980s.

Chart 1 – Important milestones of the Main Education Project during the 1980s

1980	<i>Declaración de México</i> , de 1979.
	<i>Recomendación de Quito</i> , de 1981.
	<i>Reunión de Santa Lucía</i> , realizada em 1982.
	<i>Reunión de México</i> , realizada em 1984 (PROMEDLAC I).
	<i>Reunión de Bogotá</i> , realizada em 1987 (PROMEDLAC II).
	<i>Reunión de Guatemala</i> , realizada em 1989 (PROMEDLAC III).

Source: prepared by the authors.

As indicated in Chart 1, there were several documents and meetings that demarcated the Main Education Project. Based on UNESCO (2001), the actions developed within the scope of the Main Education Project, in the 1980s, focused especially on the character of its foundation and the development of its first strategies to achieve the project's objectives.

In this sense, the *Declaración de Ciudad de México*, resulting from the discussions and ideas generated at MINEDLAC V, held in 1979 in Mexico City, represents the initial milestone for the

⁵ In addition to these entities, the following participated in the event: Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, as Member States; Spain, the United States of America, among others, as observers; representatives of the United Nations, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Program, the Inter-American Development Bank, among others (UNESCO, 1980).

formulation and consolidation of the Main Education Project as an educational project for Latin American countries. In line with Bittelbrunn (2013), it is highlighted that education, based on the conception incorporated in this declaration, acquired a relevant role in the process of productive restructuring of Latin American capital. From this perspective, “[...] education is an instrument in releasing the potential of human beings, in the search for a fairer and more balanced society. Political and economic independence cannot be achieved without an educated population that understands its reality and assumes its destiny” (UNESCO-OREALC, 1979, p. 2, our translation).

From the *Declaración de Ciudad de México*, the idea began to spread that education would be linked to a new type of development⁶, more “[...] balanced that contributes to the reorientation of economic activities towards greater social homogeneity and the production of goods and services that are truly necessary for society and nations” (UNESCO-OREALC, 1979, p. 2, our translation). Thus, the discourse instilled in the declaration defends and disseminates the conception that education would have the role of humanizing this “new” development as it would contribute to forging a culturally independent future (UNESCO-OREALC, 1979).

Regarding this “[...] new conception of development [...]” (UNESCO, 1980, p. 21, our translation), the Final Report of the Regional Conference of Ministers of Education and Ministers in Charge of Economic Planning of the Mexican States of Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by UNESCO in cooperation with ECLAC and the OAS, in Mexico City, in 1979, says the following: “[...] a new conception of development and policies for promote it, centered on social objectives of participation of all groups of the population [...], responding to a comprehensive approach that articulates the economic, social and cultural aspects of this development” (UNESCO, 1980, p. 21-22, our translation).

The comprehensive approach, referenced in the excerpt above, concerns the articulation of economic, social, and cultural aspects. In another excerpt from this same report, education is defined based on the tripod: democratization, social effectiveness, and humanism, placing it within the framework of “[...] global development that seeks to harmonize economic growth, social and cultural progress, the aspirations of the individual and the demands of society” (UNESCO, 1980, p. 14, our translation). In this sense, given this new conception of development, incorporated into the documents, education is called to “[...] play a capital role, releasing the creative potential of millions of men and women at the service of their progress and their countries, developing the knowledge, attitudes, civic and moral behaviors and scientific and technical skills favorable to such development” (UNESCO, 1980, p. 22, our translation).

Based on this organism, for education to effectively fulfill this role, a review and reorientation of its objectives, contents, and methods, as well as changes in internal and external factors, were required. These changes were listed as objectives, in the milestones indicated in Chart 1. For example, in Chart 2, below, the objectives presented in the *Declaración de Ciudad de México*, which should be fulfilled by the Member States - include Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. These objectives also guided the other documents resulting from the aforementioned project.

⁶ Tinoco (2010) indicates that the idea of development dates to the post-World War II period, much more as a political concern than as an academic problem, given the effects caused by the war. At this time, the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC) also emerged.

Chart 2 – Objectives to be met by Member States, within the scope of *Declaración de Ciudad de México*

Objective 1	To provide a minimum general education of 8 to 10 years and set the goal of incorporating all school-age children into the education system before 1999, following national education policies.
Objective 2	To adopt policies to eliminate illiteracy before the end of the century and expand educational services for adults.
Objective 3	To gradually allocate greater investments to education, until at least 7 to 8% of GDP is allocated to educational action, to exceed existing investment and allow education to fully contribute to development and become the main engine.
Objective 4	To give maximum priority and attention to the most disadvantaged groups, located mainly in rural areas and suburban areas, which require urgent actions and diversified opportunities according to their realities, overcoming the great differences that still exist between their living conditions and those of other groups.
Objective 5	To undertake the necessary reforms so that education responds to the characteristics, needs, aspirations, and cultural values of each person and to contribute to boosting and renewing science teaching and strengthening the link between educational systems and the world of work.
Objective 6	To use all possible means, from the school and the media to natural resources, and make a special effort to achieve, in the short term, the transformation of curricula in line with the needs of less favored groups.
Objective 7	To adopt effective measures to renew teacher training systems, before and after their incorporation into teaching and to provide opportunities to enrich and update their level of knowledge and pedagogical capacity.
Objective 8	To promote teachers economically and socially, through the establishment of working conditions that ensure them a situation following their social importance and professional dignity.
Objective 9	To conceive economic growth within a broad context of social development, closely linking education planning with the economic, social, and global planning of each country.
Objective 10	To pay special attention to the formulation of objectives and programs for the qualitative improvement and quantitative expansion of higher education, reconciling the autonomy of the university with the sovereignty of the State.
Objective 11	To ensure that educational planning promotes the participation and incorporation of all groups and institutions committed, in some way, to educational tasks, whether formal or non-formal.
Objective 12	To provide an organization and administration of education suited to the new requirements which, in most countries in the region, require greater decentralization of decisions and organizational processes, and greater flexibility to ensure multisectoral actions.

Source: prepared by the author based in the *Declaración de Ciudad de México* (UNESCO-OREALC, 1979, p. 4, our translation).

From the data presented in Chart 2, we observed that multiple objectives were incorporated into the *Declaración de Ciudad de México* to be implemented over the two decades of development of the Main Education Project. Some of them are general education lasting from 8 to 10 years; minimum GDP investment; strengthening the relationship between education and the world of work; curriculum change; teacher training; promotion of economic-social growth, linking education planning to economic and social planning; participation of individuals and/or public and/or private entities in planning formal or non-formal education; management and administration of education with a greater degree of decentralization of decisions and organizational processes.

In the same direction, the *Recomendación de Quito*, resulting from the *Reunión regional intergubernamental sobre los objetivos, las estrategias y las modalidades de acción de un Proyecto principal en la esfera de la educación en la región de América Latina y el Caribe*, held in 1981 in the city of Quito, in Ecuador (UNESCO-OREALC, 1981; 1982), constituted a second important milestone for the founding of the project, reaffirming the objectives and principles set out in the *Declaración de Ciudad de México*, in addition to pointing out some strategies and plans for action.

The 1981 *Recomendación de Quito* emphasizes three (3) specific objectives for the Main Education Project: 1) ensure school, by 1999, for all children of school age, as well as a minimum general education of 8 to 10 years; 2) eliminate illiteracy and develop educational services for adults; and, finally, 3) improve the quality and efficiency of educational systems, by carrying out the necessary reforms (UNESCO-OREALC, 1981).

To achieve these specific objectives, some strategies were listed, including the allocation of 7 to 8% of GDP to education, gradually; the renewal of teacher training and training systems, efficiency in educational administration and supervision; adapting content and structures to the needs of the individual and the community; the linking of education to productive work; **the promotion of a pedagogy centered on creativity, permanent research, and a liberating spirit**; the definition of professional profiles for work, to suit different jobs, in the formal and/or non-formal scope; the use of the media and its language for actions aimed at education; training leaders and teachers to take on new responsibilities and tasks, as well as adapting education administration so that its functioning and structures respond to new duties and situations; among other strategies and measures that make it possible to achieve the objectives established for the Main Education Project (UNESCO-OREALC, 1981).

The third important milestone in the founding stage of the Main Education Project was the *Reunión de Santa Lucía* (1982). This was the first meeting held by the Intergovernmental Regional Committee of the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean, when it was still provisional, given that such a committee was established at the 113th session held by the UNESCO Executive Council, in 1981 (UNESCO-OREALC, 1982). As indicated by Unesco-Orealc (1982, p. 3, our translation):

The establishment of the Committee and its meeting in 1982 had been requested by the Director General of UNESCO in the Recommendation of the Quito Intergovernmental Meeting (April 1981), which structured and adopted the Main Project, recommending it by the Conference of Ministers of Education and Ministers in Charge of Planning Economic in the Latin American and Caribbean Region, which took place in Mexico in December 1979.

Also, at the *Reunión de Santa Lucía*, in 1982, the formulation of a statute for the committee was established, which was only established, permanently, at the 22nd General Conference of UNESCO, in 1983 (UNESCO-OREALC, 1984). After the creation and permanent institution of the committee, its first meeting, PROMEDLAC I, took place in 1984, in Mexico City, with the objective: “[...] to take stock of progress, difficulties encountered and priorities for action, to that the objectives of the Project be achieved in the future, as well as the formulation of a Regional Action Plan and the examination of the role that horizontal, regional and international cooperation is playing” (UNESCO-OREALC, 1985, p. 3, translation our).

Committee meetings were held every two (2) years. Thus, PROMEDLAC II took place between March 24 and 28, 1987, in the city of Bogotá, Colombia (UNESCO-OREALC, 1987). Like PROMEDLAC I, this second meeting also aimed to take stock of the difficulties encountered in applying the recommendations indicated in the first meeting. Furthermore, it adopted some recommendations for the fulfillment of the Main Education Project throughout 1987 and until 1989.

In 1989, between the 26th and 30th of June, in the city of Guatemala, PROMEDLAC III took place. This third meeting also followed the trend of previous PROMEDLACs: carrying out a diagnosis of the actions that were put into action in previous years and proposing new actions to be developed in favor of the project, as was, for example, the second Regional Plan (UNESCO-OREALC, 1988). As indicated in Bulletin 19, PROMEDLAC III constituted one of the important milestones for the development of the Main Education Project, both in the political and technical aspects (UNESCO-OREALC, 1988). See the excerpt below:

From a political point of view, the presence of numerous countries represented by their highest authorities and the unanimous consensus regarding the priorities of the second Regional Plan approved at the meeting, show that the Main Project constitutes an effective instrument in defining national educational policies and that there is a community of ideas at the regional level whose reference is possible cooperation actions. From a technical point of view, the meeting showed that the activities carried out during this decade allowed the accumulation of a significant amount of experience, trained personnel, and information that constitute a solid basis for future actions. The text of the approved recommendations and the Guatemala Declaration indicate that between the technical and the political aspects, there are strong bonds of maturity that pedagogical thought and action have acquired in the region (UNESCO-OREALC, 1988, p. 5, our translation).

In summary, the *Declaración de Ciudad de México*, of 1979, the *Recomendación de Quito*, of 1981, the *Reunión de Santa Lucía*, of 1982, PROMEDLAC I, of 1984, PROMEDLAC II, of 1987, and, finally, the PROMEDLAC III, from 1989, represent important milestones regarding the founding and development of the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean, in the 1980s.

The entire Main Education Project, since its conception in 1979, has conceived education in close relation with work. For UNESCO (1980, p. 23, our translation), such debates were inspired by a “[...] humanist and educational conception of work, considering it as a dimension of the integral formation and fulfillment of the individual, as well as an important part of the training process within the scope of the concept of continuing education”. This rapprochement between work and education was a recurring and central theme in the debates promoted around the Main Education Project, especially in those that gave rise to the *Declaración de Ciudad de México*, in 1979, the project's genesis document.

In this context, the formative objective of education would be to “Promote the integral, harmonious and permanent formation of man, with a humanist, democratic, national, critical and creative

orientation, open to all currents of universal thought” (UNESCO-OREALC, 1981, p. 3, our translation). This logic of human formation included in the speeches incorporated into the declarations, recommendations, and reports, within the scope of the Main Education Project, had its foundation in the Theory of Human Capital⁷, which conceives “[...] education as an instrument for the formation of resources human determinants for increasing productivity” (BITTELBRUNN, 2013, p. 43).

THE MAIN EDUCATION PROJECT AND THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN THE 1990s: MANAGEMENT AND CURRICULUM

This subsection deals with the historical milestones that characterized the development and advancement of the Main Education Project, throughout the 1990s, in Latin American and Caribbean countries. The third specific objective of the project, incorporated into the *Recomendación de Quito* of 1981, is emphasized here: improving the quality and efficiency of educational systems, through the implementation of necessary reforms (UNESCO-OREALC, 1981).

There are two central axes presented as justification in the recommendations, declarations, reports and other documents of the Main Education Project, capable of making education more efficient and of quality: the first axis concerns the reform of the management of the educational system, decentralizing it and democratizing it, thereby allowing multiple individuals and/or institutions, public and/or private, to intervene with measures for the development of management; the second axis concerns curricular reform, based on changes in content, method and training objectives (UNESCO, 1980). Regarding training objectives, these are based on the ideal of comprehensive training, based on the principles of creativity, criticism, participation, protagonism, autonomy, attitudes, values, and, mainly, the relationship between work and education.

It is not a mere causality that educational reforms, throughout the 90s, “[...] accompanied by large investments in education and centered on curricular and management transformation, constitute the scenario in which UNESCO’s action takes place” (UNESCO, 1998, p. 21). A scenario in which not only UNESCO but also “[...] banks and other international agencies [...] began to assume a predominant role in the formulation of educational policies” (NOMA, 2011, p. 114). A fact corroborated by UNESCO (2001, p. 22), which indicates that, from that historical moment onwards, there were “[...] other agencies and organizations that began to work in the field of education, especially UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank [...]”.

In the economic context, there was still a crisis, with high external debt. For Eliás (2015), the 90s of the 20th century marked a second phase of capital's offensive, with neoliberal influence, in Latin American countries, whose regulatory framework was the so-called Washington Consensus (1989). During this period, countries in the region had already made the transition to democratic regimes.

The meeting at which the Washington Consensus report was prepared was held in 1989, in the American federal capital (Washington D.C.), convened by the Institute for International Economics. The meeting was attended by “[...] high-ranking officials from the US government, representatives of multilateral organizations originating from the Bretton Woods Order, such as the IMF and the World

⁷ The concept of human capital, developed by Theodoro Schultz in the 1950s and which earned him the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1979, postulated to explain, at the same time, inequalities in development between nations and individual or social group inequalities (BITTELBRUNN, 2013, p. 39).

Bank [...]” (BARROS, 2007, p. 62). Also, Latin American representatives (economists) from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia participated in the meeting (BANDEIRA, 2002).

Bandeira (2002) also comments that these countries had the task of diagnosing and proposing adjustment measures. This is a strategy consistent with the measures adopted by neoliberalism, because, as Moraes (2001) highlights, neoliberals make a diagnosis first and then seek to provide the solution. In this sense, in the Washington Consensus approach, there were two basic causes for the Latin American crisis that was spreading during the period:

- a) the excessive growth of the State, translated into protectionism (the import substitution model), excessive regulation, and inefficient and excessive number of state-owned companies; and b) economic populism, defined by the inability to control the public deficit and keep wage demands under control from both the private and public sectors (BRESSER PEREIRA, 1991, p. 6).

Bresser Pereira (1991, p. 5) further asserts that the consensus perspective was “[...] influenced by the emergence, and affirmation as a dominant trend, of a new, neoliberal right, based on the contributions of the Austrian school (Hayek, Von Mises), the monetarists (Friedman, Phelps, Johnson) [...]”. Thus, ten (10) proposals for economic adjustments and reforms resulted from this Consensus, taking as a starting point the document produced by John Williamson: 1) fiscal discipline; 2) changes in public spending priorities; 3) tax reform; 4) positive interest rates; 5) exchange rates following market laws; 6) trade liberalization; 7) end of restrictions on foreign investments; 8) privatization of state-owned companies; 9) deregulation of economic activities; 10) guarantee of property rights (BANDEIRA, 2002).

These measures resulted in the process of economic liberalization, which resulted, for example, in the formulation of regional treaties such as Mercosur⁸ (1991); in the reactivation and modernization of the Andean Pact in the Andean Community of Nations⁹ (1991); in the transformation, in 1995, of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) into the World Trade Organization (WTO), of which Brazil, Chile and Uruguay became part; and bilateral agreements (ELIÁS, 2015). Commercial liberalization also included those activities considered fundamental social rights, including Education (BORÓN, 2007).

Borón (2007, p. 28) indicates that the economic results of democratic reconstruction are even more deplorable as “[...] in Latin America, the transition from dictatorship to democracy was accompanied by increasing interference [...] of international financial capital and the ruling classes: the IMF, the World Bank, the IDB, and the WTO”. In this direction, the incorporation of Washington Consensus policies, for Borón (2007, p. 28, our translation), was a direct consequence of the influence that such organizations exerted on Latin American countries, which resulted in: “[...] precariousness and overexploitation of the workforce, cuts in social services, concentration of income and wealth and accelerated social exclusion”.

⁸ Originally formed by Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay. Venezuela is currently suspended. In addition to Chile, other countries are also associated.

⁹ Originally created in 1969, it was made up of Chile, Venezuela, Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and Ecuador. Chile and Venezuela are currently not part of it.

When making a critical assessment of the reforms developed over the last two decades of the 20th century, Borón (2003) points to the catastrophic effects of this capital onslaught in Latin America. In the words of Borón (2003, p. 17):

The pseudo-reformism of the Washington Consensus was naked, and when the smoke of the battle and the illusions promoted by the propaganda spread by capital's great ideological indoctrination agencies cleared, what appeared before our eyes was a terrifying landscape: a devastated continent by poverty, misery, and social exclusion; an environment that was attacked and largely destroyed, sacrificed on the altar of the profits of large companies; a society torn apart and in an accelerated process of decomposition; an increasingly dependent, vulnerable and foreignized economy; a political democracy reduced to little more than a simulated electoral newspaper [...].

Thus, the need and concern, mainly by the multilateral organizations, and representatives of capital, with the development of an education project for Latin America and the Caribbean, which would be capable of “Promoting the integral, harmonious and permanent formation of the man, with a humanist, democratic, national, critical and creative orientation, open to all currents of universal thought” (UNESCO-OREALC, 1981, p. 3, our translation). A project based on a conception of integral development and on the ideal that it is possible to harmonize economic growth, and social and cultural progress, and take account of the individual subject and the collective subject (UNESCO, 1980).

However, if on the one hand, the policies were not efficient in the recovery of Latin American economies, on the other, they were effective in further intensifying the exploitation of human labor, inequality, the concentration of socially produced wealth, the poverty and misery (SADER; GENTILI, 1995). The historical-structural aspects of this process of producing inequality are linked “[...] to the economic dynamics of wealth accumulation [...]” (LEGUIZAMÓN, 2007, p. 80).

Based on Eliás (2015), in the economic sphere, the neoliberal offensive had the Washington Consensus as the reference for the development of economic policies in Latin America; in the scope of educational policies, some of the milestones were: the World Conference on Education for All, in 1990; PROMEDLAC IV, 1991; PROMEDLAC V, 1993; PROMEDLAC VI, 1996; Delors Report, 1996; *Prioridades y estrategias para la educación: examen del Banco Mundial* (BANCO MUNDIAL, 1996), among others (CASASSUS, 2001; NOMA, 2011; KRAWCZYK; VIEIRA, 2012; BARBIERI, 2018). In the specific context of the Main Education Project, the main milestones of this period are presented in Chart 3, below:

Chart 3 – Stages of the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean

Stage 3	<i>Reunión de Quito</i> , held in 1991 (PROMEDLAC IV).
	<i>Reunión de Santiago</i> , held in 1993 (PROMEDLAC V).
	<i>Reunión de Kingston</i> , held in 1996 (PROMEDLAC VI).
	<i>Reunión de Cochabamba</i> , held in 2001 (PROMEDLAC VII).

Source: prepared by the authors.

The *Reunión de Quito* was the IV Meeting of the Intergovernmental Regional Committee of the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean (PROMEDLAC IV)¹⁰, held in the city of Quito, Ecuador, between April 22 and 25, 1991. It followed the trend of previous meetings of making a diagnosis of the progress made based on the objectives and goals outlined so far in previous meetings, as well as proposing new directions. This meeting was the first held within the scope of the Main Education Project in the 90s. It played an important role in the development of the project, as it took place shortly after the World Conference on Education for All, held between the 5th and 9th of March 1990, in Jomtien, Thailand, incorporating and aligning with the provisions contained in the World Declaration on Education for All: satisfaction of basic learning needs (UNESCO, 1998). Thus, it is described in the document *Cuarta Reunión del Comité Regional Intergubernamental del Proyecto Principal en la Esfera de la Educación en América Latina y el Caribe: Informe Final*:

PROMEDLAC IV constitutes the first regional meeting after the Jomtien Conference. It is worth highlighting the important points of convergence between one and the other, which materialize in the “*Declaração de Quito*” which constitutes a milestone in the development of education in Latin America and the Caribbean, both due to the technical aspects and the political will that this document contains (UNESCO-OREALC, 1991a, p. 2, our translation).

PROMEDLAC IV, as well as the documents that emerged from it, such as the *Declaración de Quito*, indicated in the excerpt above, were not only aligned with the Jomtien conference but also, “[...] with the *Action Framework for the satisfaction of Basic Learning Needs*, as well as the directives and action plans of UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, WB, IDB and UNFPA [...]” (UNESCO, 1991, p. 19). It is worth highlighting that the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, resulted in the World Declaration on Education for All: satisfaction of basic learning needs. This conference was convened by the World Bank, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) bringing together mainly those countries that received loans from the World Bank and signatories from the United Nations (UN), in addition to the participation of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) as a co-sponsor (CASASSUS, 2001; FIGUEIREDO, 2005). Its objective was “[...] to build a consensus that would support the Ten-Year Education Plans, especially for countries with a larger population [...]” (FIGUEIREDO, 2005, p. 86), reaffirming our understanding that there is an intensified movement of these institutions, through their agents, in the elaboration and construction of a project for the internationalization of educational policies for Latin American basic education.

The meeting held in Mexico, in 1979, which resulted in the *Declaración de Ciudad de México*, marking the beginning of the Main Education Project, in the 1980s, to try to justify reforms in the educational systems of Latin American countries – including if here Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay – during PROMEDLAC IV, a prognosis was made of the changes that occurred in Education, as well as the possible causes that hindered the fulfillment of the goals and objectives established in previous meetings. In this sense, based on the final report of the meeting, what can be observed is that the justification for the education crisis fell on a supposed loss of dynamism and the exhaustion of a conception and style of

¹⁰ Brazil, Chile and Uruguay participated as Member States, along with other countries. The meeting also included the participation of international organizations, including: ECLAC, UNICEF, World Bank, IDB, among others (UNESCO-OREALC, 1991).

educational development that had not been able to reconcile quantitative growth with satisfactory levels of quality and equity (UNESCO-OREALC, 1991a). Below is the scenario outlined in the report:

[...] Focused mainly on the legitimate need to extend coverage, characterized by: 1) a centralized, bureaucratic, and often authoritarian administration; 2) a short-term vision in decision making; 3) significant isolation in other sectors of the State and society; 4) a homogeneous educational offer for heterogeneous populations; 5) educational processes focused more on teaching than on the professional role of teachers (UNESCO-OREALC, 1991a, p. 20, our translation).

As indicated in previous paragraphs, based on studies by Moraes (2001), in neoliberal policies, the diagnosis is first made and then the solution is presented. In this logic, aiming “[...] a new style that develops in people the capabilities and qualities for their participation in a fair, peaceful and supportive society in the 21st century [...]” (UNESCO-OREALC, 1991a, p. 21, our translation), it was suggested, during PROMEDLAC IV, the development of some strategic lines, such as a) the articulation between education and development strategies; b) strengthening the democratic dimension as an educational development strategy; c) articulation of new alliances around education; d) modernization of planning and management modalities; e) curricular reorientation to improve the quality of basic education; f) new conceptualization of literacy and basic adult education; g) incorporation of a new dynamic in education, strengthening the role of education, the family, the school, community organizations and the media; and, finally, h) diversification of sources of financing for educational services (UNESCO-OREALC, 1991a).

Attention is drawn here to strategies D and E. The first concerns the issue of managing the educational system which, according to Unesco-Orealc (1991a, p. 22, our translation), is linked to “[...] broader processes of transformation of the State, such as deconcentration and decentralization [...]”, that is, this represents the reduction of the role of the State in education, which was already present in the speeches of the actions of the Main Project of Education, as indicated in the previous topic of this article. The second refers to the strategy of curricular reform and, with that, the training principles and objectives that should be incorporated into Latin American basic education. This strategy represents a key point in articulating the provisions of the Jomtien conference. As Unesco-Orealc (1991a, p. 22, our translation) indicates:

The reorientation of the curriculum to improve the quality of basic education, transferring the curricular axis based on disciplines to one based on basic learning needs, derived from the characteristics and orientation of each country. Among them, both those of an instrumental nature and those of an ethical-transformative nature are considered, which refers to the relationship with oneself, cultural identity, and the environment.

The basic learning needs, set out in the World Declaration on Education for All: satisfaction of basic learning needs, refer to “[...] both the essential instruments for learning (such as reading and writing, oral expression, calculation, problem-solving), regarding the basic contents of learning (such as **knowledge, skills, values , and attitudes**) [...]” (UNESCO, 1998, p. 3, emphasis added).

The entire debate surrounding PROMEDLAC IV resulted in the drafting of the *Declaración de Quito*, which reiterates that:

Transformations in management and the commitment of all sectors are necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for the new educational strategy. These changes must be complemented with modifications in pedagogical practices and teaching content. Improving the quality of

education means, from this point of view, boosting teacher professionalization processes and promoting curricular transformation through proposals based on satisfying the basic educational needs of the individual and society, which enables access to information, which allows thinking and express clearly and that strengthen abilities to solve problems, critically analyze reality, connect actively and in solidarity with others, protect and improve the environment, cultural heritage and their living conditions (UNESCO-OREALC, 1991b, p. 45, our translation).

In the context of the Project in the 90s, different educational and curricular policies emerged in countries such as Brazil, Chile and Uruguay, stating that: a) for the transformation of education management, we observed Law 9,394, of 1996, which established the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDBEN- *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional*), in the Brazilian educational context, which has already undergone several modifications; in Chile, Law 18,962, of 1990, established the *Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Enseñanza* (LOCE), which was replaced by Law 20,370, of 2009, which established the *Ley General de Educación* (LGE); and finally, in Uruguay, Law 18,437, of 2008, replaced Law No. 15,739, of 1985, considered at the time to be of an emergency nature; b) for the curricular transformations for basic education put into practice during this period, the following educational policies were identified: in the Brazilian context, the elaboration of the National Curricular Parameters of 1996 and 1997; in the Chilean educational context, Decree n° 40 of 1996, which established the *Objetivos Fundamentales y Contenidos Mínimos Obligatorios para la Educación Básica*; and, finally, in the context of Uruguayan basic education, the *Plan 1996* for the Basic Cycle of secondary education was identified (FELDMAN et al., 2015).

Thus, following the provisions of the declaration, the need to think about a new style of educational development stands out, in which education, on the one hand, is “[...] a key element of a social policy that promotes a type of development with greater equity [...]” and, on the other, is a key element for “[...] the formation of human resources capable of actively incorporating into the world of work, equipped with new characteristics: creativity, intelligence and solidarity” (UNESCO-OREALC, 1991a, p. 20, our translation). In this sense, for Casassus (2001), PROMEDLAC IV determined that management would be responsible for turning this new stage of development, based mainly on the decentralization of educational processes and curricular transformation.

PROMEDLAC V¹¹, held in the city of Santiago, Chile, in 1993, reinforces the ideas elaborated by the previous meeting, focusing the debates on “[...] equity, improvement in the quality of education, eradication of illiteracy and the basic satisfactions of learning to ensure relevant and quality education for young people and adults” (BITTELBRUNN, 2013, p. 76). This meeting culminated in the *Declaración de Santiago*, which ratified that, for an adequate response to the demands of the period, “[...] a profound transformation of traditional educational approaches and management [...]” is required (UNESCO- OREALC, 1993, p. 37, our translation).

The constitution of the International Education Commission for the 21st century, chaired by Jacques Delors, dates from this same year (BORGES, 2016). This is important because, based on the document *Quinta Reunión del Comité Regional Intergubernamental del Proyecto Principal en la Esfera de la Educación en América Latina y el Caribe: Informe Final*, it was observed that, during the speech of the then General Director of UNESCO, Mr. Federico Mayor, the mention of the Commission led by Delors was clear,

¹¹ As in the previous meeting, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay participated in this meeting as Member States, along with other countries. The meeting also included the participation of international organizations, including: ECLAC, UNICEF, World Bank, IDB, UNDP, among others (UNESCO-OREALC, 1991a).

when he said, in his speech, that he would transmit to the International Commission on Education for the 21st century the recommendations and documents arising from PROMEDLAC V (UNESCO-OREALC, 1993).

Adding to this entire process, in 1996, the PROMEDLAC VI meeting was held¹², the publication of the Report “Education a treasure to discover: report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century” (DELORS et al., 1998) and the publication of the document “*Prioridades y estrategias para la educación: examen del Banco Mundial*”, under the guidance of the World Bank (1996).

Such as the historical milestones of the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean, in the 1980s, in particular, the *Declaración de Ciudad de México*, these documents, as historical reference of the project in the 1990s, reinforce a conception of education as human capital and the idea that it is necessary to link it to work, from a humanistic perspective, to meet the social and economic demands of the “new” development model of the globalized world and knowledge (BITTELBRUNN, 2013). Furthermore, such documents also reinforce the principles of decentralization of education management; curricular reform centered on learning and teaching methods and, consequently, on the student and no longer on the teacher; a flexible curriculum adapted to the local reality; quality of education; community participation in school matters; more focused financing policies, etc.

There were many actions and reforms carried out by Latin American governments, including in Chile, Brazil, and Uruguay, achieving the objectives, goals, and strategies established in regional meetings and international Conferences, which resulted in a series of Declarations with guidelines and orientations. In addition, financial commitments were established with international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). As Harvey (2008, p. 85) states:

Around 1994, about eighteen countries (such as Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, and Uruguay) accepted agreements that provided for the forgiveness of 60 billion dollars of their debts. Naturally, they hoped that this debt relief would trigger an economic recovery that would allow them to pay off the rest of the debt promptly. The problem was that the IMF forced the countries that accepted this small debt forgiveness (that is, small concerning what the banks could have granted) to swallow the poison pill of neoliberal institutional reforms.

In **Chile**, given that this country had already applied neoliberal adjustments to Education in previous decades, educational policies followed a different path than others, as they sought to “[...] achieve equity through the regulation of forms of organization and management of the educational system, created during the dictatorial period” (KRAWCZYK; VIEIRA, 2012, p. 84). For the authors, the Chilean State reserved for itself the functions of supervision and elaboration of curricular guidelines, as well as evaluating the performance and equity of the educational system. In this sense, during this period, positive discrimination policies were applied, focused on the most vulnerable population, through, for example, Quality and Equity Improvement Programs (MECE-*Melhoramento da Qualidade e Equidade*), financed by the World Bank (KRAWCZYK; VIEIRA, 2012; HIGUEIRAS, 2014).

¹² The last PROMEDLAC (VII) was carried out at the beginning of the 21st century, in 2001, in the city of Cochabamba, Bolivia (UNESO, 2001). At this meeting, the ministers asked UNESCO to prepare a new project within the framework of the Dakar guidelines (PAIVA; ARAUJO, 2008). The new education project for the Region was renamed the Regional Project for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (PRELAC), scheduled to run from 2002 to 2017 (UNESCO-OREALC, 2004).

According to Higuera (2014, p. 101), the main objectives of MECE I (1992-1998) for Basic Education are “[...] improving quality, equity, and efficiency; and the institutional development and management and financial capacity of the different levels of the system”. The 900 schools Program, as a targeting policy, which had been implemented since 1989, was incorporated into MECE (KRAWCZYK; VIEIRA, 2012).

In **Brazil**, one of the programs created was the School Strengthening Fund (FUNDESCOLA-*Fundo de Fortalecimento da Escola*), which began in 1997, whose formulation was influenced by the Chilean MECE (HIGUEIRAS, 2014). Oliveira, Fonseca, and Toschi (2005) state that FUNDESCOLA originated from an agreement signed between the Ministry of Education (MEC) and the World Bank (BM). Oliveira, Fonseca, and Toschi (2005, p 128) also state that the program's mission was to “[...] develop school management, improving the quality of public schools, in the North, Northeast, and Midwest regions”. Furthermore, FUNDESCOLA should work in line with other initiatives and programs, such as Direct Money at School Program (PDDE-*Programa Dinheiro Direto na Escola*), the National Basic Education Assessment System (SAEB-*Sistema Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Básica*), the Fund for Maintenance and Development of Elementary Education and Valorization of Teaching (FUNDEF-*Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento do Ensino Fundamental e de Valorização do Magistério*).

As in Brazil and Chile, this process of incorporating programs to “improve” basic education also occurred in Uruguay. In that country, the *Proyecto de Mejoramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Primaria* (MECAEP) was formulated and implemented, which, according to Higuera (2014), like FUNDESCOLA, was also influenced by the Chilean MECE. MECAEP was developed in financial and technical cooperation with the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. According to the World Bank (2007, p. 18):

The World Bank loan channeled US\$77 million through three programs known as MECAEP, which aimed to strengthen early childhood and elementary education. MECAEP I and MECAEP II were implemented between 1995 and 2003, while MECAEP III will run until 2007. MECAEP I focused on expanding preschool coverage and improving teaching materials and study texts, while MECAEP II and III focused on the implementation of full-time schools. The IDB loan channeled US\$71 million through two secondary education programs: MESYFOD (1996-2000) and MEMFOD (2001-2006), which aim to improve universal access to the first cycle of secondary education, improve the quality of schools secondary and vocational techniques, improve teacher training and modernize school management in high school.

In this sense, while the World Bank financed Basic Education in the initial years, the IDB financed Secondary Education in the final years. Pedretti and Visconti (2005, p. 37-38) point out that it was from that moment on that an “[...] Educational Reform project with an external design, elaborated based on credits from the BID for Secondary Education, Technical-Vocational and Teacher Training, as well as the BM for Primary Education”.

Therefore, the guidelines and orientations disseminated through declarations, recommendations, and other documents on education constituted the basis for educational and curricular policies developed within the scope of Latin American governments, in particular Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, not only of the last decades of the 20th century, as well as the most recent educational and curricular policies.

As a result of this process, “[...] institutional reforms of education systems were promoted, aiming to promote modernization, administrative decentralization, and competitiveness in the context of

the globalized world” (SANDERS, 2008, p. 162), which intensified and consolidated the neoliberal political agenda for basic education, mainly in the interests of international institutions, for Latin American countries (SANDERS, 2008; BARBIERI, 2018).

In the same direction as Sanders (2008), the analyses by Krawczyk and Vieira (2012, p. 19) indicate that the “[...] process of external induction imposed uniformity on educational policy in the region, a uniformity resulting from the growing weight of international agencies and the leadership of the World Bank [...]”. This uniformity regarding official documents reflects what Shiroma, Campos, and Garcia (2005), in their studies, call “discursive hegemony”.

This study agrees with Saviani (2019) who, when analyzing pedagogical ideas in Brazilian basic education in the 90s, indicates that such ideas were based on neoproductivism, whose initial basis was the flexible accumulation model (HARVEY, 2008), as well as in its variants: neo-Scholarism, neo-constructivism and neo-technicism.

This meant, in the conception of Saviani (2019), within the scope of educational reforms, carried out from that period, the resumption of didactic, psychological, pedagogical, and administrative principles for education, which were based on: 1) the Theory of Human Capital¹³; 2) in the motto “learning to learn”¹⁴; 3) in Piagetian-inspired constructivism, now aligned with post-modern perspectives, and, finally, 4) in the incorporation of the ideals of skills pedagogy and control of the quality of education through the principle of total quality, among others.

However, although Saviani (2019) carried out his analysis with pedagogical ideas in Brazilian education as his object, neoproductivism and its variants also influenced and continue to influence not only educational and curricular policy in Brazil, but the educational and curricular policies formulated and implemented by the other countries that constituted the object of study of this research.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article analyzed the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean and the incorporation of its guidelines and orientations in the development of educational and curricular policies for Latin American basic education, specifically in Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay.

The results indicated that the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean was created at the end of the 70s, as a response to the social, political, and economic transformations from the capital crisis and the process of productive restructuring. In this context, the idealization of this project occurred in 1979, during MINEDLAC V, promoted and organized by UNESCO with the cooperation of other institutions. This meeting resulted in the 1979 *Declaración de Ciudad de México*, a document that contains the genesis of the Main Education Project, in its objectives, goals, strategies, and provisions.

The results also indicated that the educational reforms promoted over the last two decades of the 20th century when supported by the plans and actions of the Main Education Project, incorporated into private educational projects for basic education a conception of humanistic and human capital education, which can be seen in the educational policies of Brazil, Chile and Uruguay. In this logic, the

¹³ Education “[...] comes to be understood as an investment in individual human capital that enables people to compete for available jobs” (SAVIANI, 2019, p. 430).

¹⁴ As education no longer guarantees employment, but rather the status of employability, “the important thing is to learn to learn, that is, to learn to study, to seek knowledge, to deal with new situations” (SAVIANI, 2019, p. 431).

concept of Integral Training, which is present in the historical milestones of the Main Education Project, is linked to the perspective that, through education, harmonized and egalitarian economic, social, and cultural development is possible.

To cope with this process, education should undergo some transformations which, as identified, were based, mainly, from the 1990s onwards, on the concept of quality of education. In turn, it was based, according to the analyses undertaken in this work, on the categories of management and curricular transformation. Regarding management, the milestones were categorical about the idea of transforming management through decentralization; on the other hand, regarding curricular transformation, an insistent defense of the idea that content should be modified was identified, emphasizing satisfying basic learning needs, as well as centering the teaching and learning process on the student, preparing teachers for that.

The entire movement around the fulfillment of the goals, objectives, and strategic plans of the Main Education Project culminates in the process of similar and standardized educational policies, at least at the level of their discourses. A “discursive hegemony” that guides educational reforms in the countries focused on in this research, even today.

In this sense, the need to advance in studies related to the impact of the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean is highlighted, regarding the analysis of current educational and curricular policies for basic education, not only in the countries analyzed in this article, as well as other countries that make up Latin America and the Caribbean.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with this article.