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ARTICLE



The invention of the classroom: republic, citizenship, and school space in Colombia: 1819–1830

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ABSTRACT

This article studies the invention of the classroom in a time of crisis – the one experienced after the independence war and in the framework of the Republic of Colombia building process (1819–1830). At that time, the expectations about the future were greater than the experiences about the past and there was confidence about the role of education in the process of transformation of the former vassal into Republican citizen. At that time, school practices were followed into the classroom that sought the distribution of the bodies in the classroom, the planning and synchronisation of the times in which the children were in school. The aim of all these school educational practices was the constitution of a republican citizen: disciplined, adherent to the norms, times, and instructions, and who recognised his place in a highly hierarchical society.

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Introduction

Some of the most relevant questions concerning contemporary humanities and social sciences are why, how, and what people do.¹ One way to answer these questions is to study sociability spaces.² In Latin America,³ in the first half of the nineteenth century, the

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¹Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993); Andrew Pickering, *Science as Practice and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Laurent Fleury, *Sociology of Culture and Cultural Practices: The Transformative Power of Institutions* (Lanham (USA): Lexington Books, 2014); Frank Safford, *The Ideal of the Practical: Colombia's Struggle to Form a Technical Elite* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2014); Karin Knorr Cetina, Theodore R. Schatzki, and Eike von Savigny, *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (London: Routledge, 2005); Roger Chartier, *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer* (Philadelphia (USA): University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

²Colin Divall, *Cultural Histories of Sociabilities, Spaces and Mobilities* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Pilar González, *Civilidad y política en los orígenes de la nación argentina: las sociabilidades en Buenos Aires, 1829–1862* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2008); Marcelo Caruso and Eugenia Roldán, “El impacto de las nuevas sociabilidades: sociedad civil, recursividad comunicativa y cambio educativo en la Hispanoamérica postcolonial,” *Revista Brasileira de História da Educação* 11, no. 2 [26] (23 December 2011): 15–52; Fabio Zambrano, “Las Sociabilidades Modernas En La Nueva Granada,” *Cahiers Des Ameriques Latines* 10 (1990): 197–203; Maurice Agulhon, *Política, imágenes, sociabilidades: de 1789 a 1989* (Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 2016); Gilberto Loaiza Loaiza, *Sociabilidad, religión y política en la definición de la nación: Colombia, 1820–1886* (Bogotá: Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2011); Stéphane Van Damme, “Sociabilité et culture urbaines,” *Histoire de l'éducation*, no. 90 (1 May 2001): 79–100; Maurice Agulhon, *Working Class and Sociability in France Before 1848* (Cambridge University Press, 1984).

³Alberto Martínez Boom and José M.L. Bustamante Vismara, *Escuela Pública y Maestro En América Latina. Historias de Un Acontecimiento, Siglos XVIII-XIX* (Bogotá: Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, 2014); Olga Lucia Zuluaga Garcés, *La educación pública en Colombia 1845–1875: libertad de enseñanza y adopción de Pestalozzi en Bogotá* (Instituto para la Investigación Educativa y el Desarrollo Pedagógico, n.d.); Olga Lucia Zuluaga Garcés, *Colombia, dos modelos de su*

classroom was one of the main social spaces where people used to be, where “people were made” and this is why the characterisation and analysis of the role of education at that foundational moment is presented as an opportunity for historical understanding of the practices through which has been produced the star of western political sociability: the citizen.⁴ This production will also allow for an understanding of the ways in which the concept of Republic ceased to be an abstract idea and became a reality.⁵ In this way, the history of education represents an analytical tool that allows for the characterisation and analysis of the spaces of sociability where education has taken place, of the historical environment, and of its emergence and its structure and composition.

This article studies the invention of the classroom in a time of crisis – the one experienced after the independence war and in the framework of the Republic of Colombia building process (1819–1830). At that time, the expectations about the future were greater than the experiences about the past and there was confidence about the role of education in the process of transformation of the former vassal into republican citizen.⁶

The research makes use of official political sources as *The Constitution of the Republic of Colombia* of 1821, legislation issued between 1819 and 1830, reports from government officials and national educational programmes. All these sources are in the General Archive of the Nation in Colombia and in the National Library of Colombia. Additionally, the paper studies cultural sources as memoirs of travellers from the period and newspapers of the period. Finally, an international source, the *Manual of the System of Mutual Education* by Joseph Lancaster was reviewed.

The above sources are used as tools of analysis to answer the paper’s research questions: When did the invention of the classroom occur in Colombia? And what was

práctica pedagógica durante el siglo XIX (Medellín: Centro de Investigaciones Educativas, Facultad de Educación, Universidad de Antioquia, 1979).

⁴Márquez Estrada, José Wilson. “De vecinos a ciudadanos. Las estrategias políticas y culturales en el proceso de formación de la ciudadanía en Colombia: 1810–1860,” *Anuario de Historia Regional y de las Fronteras* 16, no. 1 (2011): 295–316; Cristina Rojas, “La Construcción de La Ciudadanía En Colombia Durante El Gran Siglo Diecinueve 1810–1929,” *Revista Poligramas*, no. 29 (2008): 295; Lucía Lionetti, “La Función Republicana de La Escuela Pública (Spanish),” *Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa* 10, no. 27 (2005): 1225–55; Marcelo A. Caruso, “Latin American Independence: Education and the Invention of New Polities,” *Paedagogica Historica* 46, no. 4 (2010): 409–17; Marcelo A. Caruso, “Literacy and Suffrage: The Politicisation of Schooling in Postcolonial Hispanic America (1810–1850),” *Paedagogica Historica* 46, no. 4 (2010): 463–78; Eugenia Roldán Vera, “Towards a Logic of Citizenship: Public Examinations in Elementary Schools in Mexico, 1788–1848: State and Education Before and After Independence,” *Paedagogica Historica* 46, no. 4 (2010): 511–24.

⁵Gabriel Entin, “Catholic Republicanism: The Creation of the Spanish American Republics during Revolution,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 79, no. 1 (2018): 105–23; Lina Del Castillo, *Crafting a Republic for the World: Scientific, Geographic, and Historiographic Inventions of Colombia* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2018); Gabriel Entin et al., “De la república desincorporada a la república representada. El lenguaje republicano durante la revolución del Río de la Plata,” in *Repensando el siglo XIX desde América Latina y Francia: homenaje al filósofo Arturo A. Roig* (Ediciones Colihue SRL, 2009); José Antonio Aguilar and Rafael Rojas, *El Republicanismo En Hispanoamérica* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2002); Andrés Baeza Ruz, “Enlightenment, Education, and the Republican Project: Chile’s Instituto Nacional (1810–1830),” *Paedagogica Historica* 46, no. 4 (2010): 479–93; Delgado Roza, “La Difícil Instauración Del Gobierno Republicano En El Espacio Local: Las Municipalidades y Los Alcaldes Parroquiales En La Provincia de Bogotá, 1821–1830,” in *La Independencia de Colombia: Miradas Transdisciplinarias* (Bogotá: Fondo Editorial UAN, Universidad Antonio Nariño, 2014); François-Xavier Guerra, “La identidad republicana en la época de la independencia,” in *Museo, memoria y nación: misión de los museos nacionales para los ciudadanos del futuro* (Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 2000).

⁶James E. Sanders, *Contentious Republicans: Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham (USA): Duke University Press, 2004); Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (London: Clarendon Press, 1996); Marixa Lasso, *Myths of Harmony: Race and Republicanism during the Age of Revolution, Colombia, 1795–1831* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007); Jorge Conde Calderón, *Buscando la nación: ciudadanía, clase y tensión racial en el Caribe colombiano, 1821–1855* (Medellín: La Carreta Editores, 2009); Reina, “Construcción de la ciudadanía a través del municipio indígena. Oaxaca en el siglo XIX,” in *Ciudadanos inesperados: espacios de formación de la ciudadanía ayer y hoy*, ed. Ariadna Acevedo Rodrigo and Paula López Caballero (México: El Colegio de México, 2012).

the role of the classroom in the process of building the Republic of Colombia and the transformation of the former colonial vassal into a republican citizen? The methodology followed to answer this questions is (1) presentation of the colonial antecedents of the classroom; (2) drawing the political context of the emergence of the classroom in Colombia; (3) analysis of the link between the processes of invention of the classroom, the Republic of Colombia and the republican citizen in the period 1819 to 1830; and (4) description of some practices that took place inside the classroom to consolidate the republican project and transform the former colonial vassal into a republican citizen.

The invention of the classroom

In Colombia, the classroom was born with the Republic.⁷ The classroom was the strategy of the new government authorities, after the war of independence against Spain between 1815 and 1824, to transform the old monarchist vassal into a republican citizen.⁸ To become a citizen, it was mandatory to learn certain attributes, such as reading and writing.⁹ These attributes were taught in the social space of the primary school, particularly in the classroom.

Previously, in the educational language of the Enlightenment – of the late eighteenth century – vassal education was a domestic issue where the role of government was minimal.¹⁰ To find out about the colonial background of the Republican classroom, we must refer to the pious schools (*escuelas pias*), which were educational institutions created with donations from individuals and managed by the Community of Jesus. These institutions were made for the education of creole, male, white, and rich children and as auspices for the children of poor whites.¹¹ However, these institutions were important in the access of a portion of the creole population to the educated society, since during the Spanish monarchy this occurred mainly through private preceptors who taught in the homes of the main families. With the expulsion of the Community of Jesus from American lands (1767), the pious schools became the first primary schools of the neogranadino territory (Colombia under Spanish rule).¹²

In addition to the pious schools administered by the Jesuits, there were also private schools, called houses of education. Both were spaces of sociability where the educational process took place, funded by agents other than the Spanish government – religious or private. One difference was that an education house was a space organised by a private preceptor (most commonly it was a room inside his house) where Creole or Spanish children were going to receive instruction, most of the time individually and only

⁷Cárdenas-Herrera, "Educación, República y Ciudadanía," 229–43.

⁸João Paulo G. Pimenta, "Education and the Historiography of Ibero-American Independence: Elusive Presences, Many Absences," *Paedagogica Historica* 46, no. 4 (2010): 419–34; Caruso, "Latin American Independence."

⁹Caruso, "Literacy and Suffrage;" Francisco de Paula Santander, "Decreto sobre establecimiento de escuelas públicas en el Departamento," in *Obra educativa de Santander, 1819–1826*, vol. I (Biblioteca de la Presidencia de la República, 1990); Simón Bolívar, "Decreto sobre la educación e instrucción públicas," in *Obra educativa de Santander, 1819–1826*, vol. I (Biblioteca de la Presidencia de la República, 1990).

¹⁰García-Sánchez, B., *De la educación doméstica a la educación pública en Colombia: Transiciones de la colonia a la república* (Bogotá: Fondo de publicaciones Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, 2007); García-Sánchez, B., "La Educación colonial en la Nueva Granada," *Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana*, no. 7 (2005): 217–38.

¹¹Oscar Saldarriaga y Javier Sáenz, "La construcción social de la infancia: pedagogía, raza y moral en Colombia, siglos XVI a XX," in *Historia de la Infancia en América Latina* (Bogotá: Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2007), 396.

¹²Cárdenas-Herrera, "Educación, República y Ciudadanía," 234.

occasionally in the form of small groups; while the pious schools had a more collective vocation and were under the protection of the Crown or of some religious order.¹³

In the early nineteenth century, the generation that had been formed under the Bourbon reforms of the late eighteenth century demanded a new type of education that, in addition to training in the dogmas of the Catholic faith, aimed to achieve social happiness. For instance, in 1808, Francisco José de Caldas,¹⁴ demanded free and equal education and government inspection and surveillance in this field. Therefore, slowly, education was leaving the private sphere of the family and began to be a matter of legislation and control by the new authorities. This is the origin of education as an object of public policy in Colombia.¹⁵

Thus, at the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a clearer turning point in the history of the transition from domestic education (living room) to school education (classroom). Caldas said sadly, in his “Discourse on Education”,¹⁶ that in 1808 a city like Santa Fe (Bogota), which had thirty thousand inhabitants, only had one public school (in the La Catedral neighbourhood) and asked his highness to promote the foundation of primary schools in the three neighbourhoods that did not yet have them: Las Nieves, San Victorino, and Santa Barbara.

One of the first Colombian political constitutions, that of Cundinamarca of 1812,¹⁷ positioned education as a right and a duty that guaranteed social happiness, so it ordered the foundation of a school of first letters – primary school – in all parishes. After that, knowing how to read and write, knowing about arithmetic and geometry, about Catholic doctrine, and the obligations and rights of the citizen became the attributes that characterised a good republican citizen and these had to be learnt in school.

After the independence war patriots and republicans demanded the leadership of the government in the promotion, inspection, and surveillance of primary schools for the benefit of the homeland,¹⁸ based on new principles of equality and merit that should be reflected in the distribution of children into this new space of sociability: the classroom.¹⁹

¹³García Sánchez, “La Educación colonial en la Nueva Granada,” María Guadalupe Cedeño Peguero, “Religiosos y Educación. Métodos y Enseñanzas En El Antiguo Obispado de Michoacán,” *Revista Mexicana de Historia de La Educación* 1, no. 1 (2013): 29–58.

¹⁴Francisco José Caldas, “Discurso Sobre La Educación,” in *Semanario de La Nueva Granada* (Paris: Librería Castellana, 1849); Francisco José Caldas, “Plan de Una Escuela Patriótica,” in *Semanario de La Nueva Granada* (Paris: Librería Castellana, 1849); Francisco José Caldas, “Reflexiones Sobre La Educación Pública,” in: *Semanario de La Nueva Granada* (Paris: Librería Castellana, 1849); Francisco José Caldas, “Virtudes de Un Buen Patriota,” *Diario Político de Santafé de Bogotá*, 11 December 1810, sec. 31, Biblioteca Virtual Luis Ángel Arango.

¹⁵Rafael Acevedo Puello, *Las letras de la provincia en la República: Educación, escuelas y libros de la patria en las provincias de la Costa Atlántica colombiana, 1821–1886* (Bogotá: Ediciones Uniandes-Universidad de los Andes, 2017); Roger Pita Pico, *Patria, Educación y Progreso: El Impulso a Las Escuelas y Colegios Públicos En La Naciente República de Colombia, 1819–1828* (Bogotá: Academia Colombiana de Historia, 2017); Franz Dieter Hensel Riveros, *Vicios, virtudes y educación moral en la construcción de la república, 1821–1852* (Bogotá: Universidad de Los Andes, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, CESO, 2006); Julio Gaitán Bohórquez, “Agenda Ilustrada y Agenda Republicana En La Cuestión Educativa Neogranadina,” *Revista Historia de La Educación Latinoamericana*, no. 14 (June 2010): 100–24; Miryam Báez Osorio, *La educación en los orígenes republicanos de Colombia* (Tunja: Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia, 2006); Lionetti, “La Función Republicana de La Escuela Pública (Spanish).”

¹⁶Caldas, “Discurso Sobre La Educación.”

¹⁷Colegio Revisor y Electoral Cundinamarca, *Constitución de La República de Cundinamarca: Reformada Por El Serenísimo Colegio Revisor y Electoral* (Santafé: Imprenta de Bruno Espinosa de los Monteros, 1812), <http://babel.banrepcultural.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p17054coll10/id/638>.

¹⁸El Congreso General de la República de Colombia, “Ley Sobre Establecimiento de Colegios ó Casas de Educación En Las Provincias, Reforma de Las Constituciones y Planes Antiguos y Formación de Otro Nuevo Uniforme En Toda La República Dada El 28 de Junio de 1821,” in *Cuerpo de Leyes de La República de Colombia. Comprende La Constitución y Las Leyes Sancionadas Por El Primer Congreso Jeneral En Las Sesiones Que Celebró Desde El 6 de Mayo Hasta El 14 de Octubre de 1821* (Bogotá: Bruno Espinosa en: Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Fondo Pineda 154, Pieza 1, 1822).

The educational legislation of the 1820s shows the expectations about the social and political function of education. In this sense, one law stands out particularly: the first republican educational law by Francisco de Paula Santander in 1820 “Decree on the establishment of public schools in the Department of Cundinamarca”;²⁰ this law established that every parish in the Republic should have a school of first letters founded by local communities.

Classroom, republic, and citizenship

Because of the scarcity of resources, the political uncertainty, and the fiscal pressure that arose as a result of the debts contracted to face the war against Spain, the Lancaster educational model,²¹ which both Bolívar and Santander had known in England, was presented as an ideal mechanism for the education of citizens.

The republican government that was formed in the 1820s not only set itself the objective of founding primary schools, but also worried about unifying the way in which they should undertake the task of educating the children of the homeland and, precisely, the Lancaster *Manual* was used as a fundamental reference in this work.

The mutual teaching system was that “those who have made greater progress in reading, writing and arithmetic communicate the knowledge they possess to others less advanced than they are”.²² Those were called monitors and had one or more auxiliary monitors, depending on the size of the class, and all were under the teacher’s baton. The *Manual* maintained that with this method, 1000 children could be served in a single school, with only one teacher, thus minimising costs and maximising resources.

The Fundamental Law of the Peoples of Colombia established that a national holiday should be held in perpetuity to commemorate three things:²³ the emancipation and the absolute independence of the peoples of Colombia; the union of a single Republic and the establishment of the Constitution; and the great triumphs and immortal victories with which

¹⁹David Hamilton, “Adam Smith and the Moral Economy of the Classroom System,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 12, no. 4 (1980): 281–298; Marcelo Caruso, ed., *Classroom Struggle: Organizing Elementary School Teaching in the 19th Century*, vol. 2, *Studies in the History of Education* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Edition, 2015); K. Tolley, *Transformations in Schooling: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (New York: Springer, 2007).

²⁰Santander, “Decreto sobre establecimiento.”

²¹Bernhard Natorp, *Andreas Bell Und Joseph Lancaster. Bemerkungen über Die von Denselben Eingeführte Schuleinrichtung, Schulzucht Und Lehrart*. (Essen: S.D. Biideker, 1817); Dell Upton, “Écoles lancastériennes, citoyenneté républicaine et imagination spatiale en Amérique au début du xix^e siècle,” trans. Françoise Balogun, *Histoire de l’éducation*, no. 102 (1 May 2004): 87–108; Joseph Lancaster, *Manual Del Sistema de Enseñanza Mutua Aplicado a Las Escuelas Primarias de Los Niños* (Bogotá: S.S. Fox, 1826); Eugenia Roldán, “Para ‘Desnacionalizar’ La Historia de La Educación: Reflexiones En Torno a La Difusión Mundial de La Escuela Lancasteriana En El Primer Tercio Del Siglo XIX,” *Revista Mexicana de Historia de La Educación* 1, no. 2 (2013): 171–98; Marcelo Caruso, “‘Teachers in Miniature’. Moral Risk, Teaching Monitors, and the Opposition to the Bell-Lancaster-System in the Early 19th Century. A Transnational Perspective,” in *Children and Youth at Risk: Historical and International Perspectives*, ed. Christine Mayer, Ingrid Lohmann and Ian Grosvenor (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009); Joseph Lancaster and Lancasterian Institute, *The Lancasterian System of Education, with Improvements* (Published for the author, and sold only at the Lancasterian Institute, 1821).

²²Lancaster and Institute, *The Lancasterian System of Education, with Improvements*, 33.

²³El Congreso General de la República de Colombia, “Ley Fundamental de La Unión de Los Pueblos de Colombia, Proclamada En Angostura El 17 de Diciembre de 1819 y Ratificada Por El Congreso de Cúcuta En 12 de Julio de 1821,” in *Cuerpo de Leyes de La República de Colombia. Comprende La Constitución y Leyes Sancionadas Por El Primer Congreso Jeneral En Las Sesiones Que Celebró Desde El 6 de Mayo Hasta El 14 de Octubre de 1821* (Bogotá: Bruno Espinosa en: Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Fondo Pineda 154, Pieza 1, 1822).

these goods have been conquered and insured. This party would be held the week of December 25 to 27 of each year and it was requested that on these days, practices will be carried out that would raise the greatness of the Republic, such as founding schools²⁴ and retaining slaves.²⁵

The opening of the schools was itself one of the main practices that were followed to transmit the new republican moral, honour the heroes, and legitimise the new order. In each act of inauguration of a new school of first letters a kind of public representation was practised that sought to theatricalise the republican values. These acts of foundation of schools were publicised in the republican press,²⁶ which was used to disseminate the progress of education thanks to the initiative of the new authorities.

The performance present at the opening of a school of first letters was pompous and, often, was attended by Vice President Santander. These ceremonial acts were attended by the civil and religious authorities of the place and sometimes speeches, contests, parties, “refreshments”, or bullfights were offered.²⁷

After the expedition of the Cucuta Constitution in 1821, in regions such as the Province of Bogotá, which was one of the first areas to be free of realistic troops, it was achieved that many laws enacted by the new authorities came into force, such as those related to the foundation of schools. In this sense, the first republican school in the capital was founded on 24 September 1821 and its first teacher, from 12 October that year, was the Franciscan presbyter Sebastián Mora Berbeo.

The expectations that government agents had of the primary school and of the Lancasterian system did not fully materialise, since the number of schools that actually adopted it was not many and the literate population was not as expected. Of the 102 parishes that the Province of Bogotá had in 1832, 62 had a primary school but just 19 followed the Lancasterian system.²⁸ The press was a vehicle that served to position, disseminate, and, in general, publicise new concepts and practices that occurred in the process of transition from the province of the Spanish monarchy to the Republic. A topic that began to take place in the press was that of public education in general and that of the primary school in

²⁴República de Colombia, “Educación Pública,” *Gaceta de Colombia*, 15 September 1822, sec. Educación Pública, Biblioteca Virtual Luis Ángel Arango; República de Colombia, “Educación Pública,” *Gaceta de Colombia*, 3 August 1823, sec. Educación Pública, Biblioteca Virtual Luis Ángel Arango; República de Colombia, “Fiestas Nacionales,” *Gaceta de Colombia*, 5 January 1823, sec. Educación Pública, Biblioteca Virtual Luis Ángel Arango; República de Colombia, “Fiestas Nacionales,” *Gaceta de Colombia*, 4 January 1824, sec. Educación pública, Biblioteca Virtual Luis Ángel Arango; República de Colombia, “Fiestas Nacionales,” *Gaceta de Colombia*, 16 January 1825, sec. Educación pública, Biblioteca Virtual Luis Ángel Arango.

²⁵El Congreso Jeneral de la República de Colombia, “Ley Sobre La Libertad de Los Partos, Manumisión y Abolición Del Tráfico de Esclavos,” in *Cuerpo de Leyes de La República de Colombia. Comprende La Constitución y Leyes Sancionadas Por El Primer Congreso Jeneral En Las Sesiones Que Celebró Desde El 6 de Mayo Hasta El 14 de Octubre de 1821* (Bogotá: Bruno Espinosa en: Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Fondo Pineda 154, Pieza 1, 1822).

²⁶República de Colombia, “Educación Primaria,” *Gaceta de Colombia*, 16 August 1829, Biblioteca Virtual Luis Ángel Arango; República de Colombia and Vásquez Rafael María, “Educación Primaria,” *Gaceta de Colombia*, 8 August 1830, Biblioteca Virtual Luis Ángel Arango; República de Colombia, “Educación Pública,” 15 September 1822; República de Colombia, “Educación Pública,” 3 August 1823; República de Colombia, “Fiestas Nacionales,” 5 January 1823; República de Colombia, “Fiestas Nacionales,” 4 January 1824; República de Colombia, “Fiestas Nacionales,” 16 January 1825; República de Colombia, “Plan de Instrucción Pública,” *Gaceta de Colombia*, 4 March 1827, sec. Parte No Oficial, Biblioteca Virtual Luis Ángel Arango; República de Colombia, “Decreto Adicional Al Plan de Estudios,” *Gaceta de Colombia*, 13 June 1830, 469 edition, sec. Educación pública, Biblioteca Virtual Luis Ángel Arango, http://www.banrepcultural.org/sites/default/files/blabr1142013_n_017.pdf.

²⁷Francisco de Paula Santander, “Fiestas nacionales del 24 al 27 de diciembre de 1822,” in *Obra educativa de Santander, 1819–1826*, vol. I (Bogotá: Biblioteca de la Presidencia de la República, 1990).

²⁸Cárdenas-Herrera, “Educación, República y Ciudadanía,” 111–42.

particular. Among the aspects that were touched on were foundation of schools, reports on the performance of public competitions, awards, new methods of teaching reading and writing, and selling books, among others.²⁹

Educational practices into the republican classroom³⁰

“Space says and communicates; That’s why educate.”³¹ This statement by Antonio Viñao is a key to reading the educational practices that were followed in the classroom of the primary schools in the first years of the Republic of Colombia (1819–1830), where the school of first letters became the materialisation of an educational project that opted for the creation of a social space that would remove children from the family space as a stage of formal education and introduce them into a new space of sociability – the classroom. See Figure 1.

The republican authorities, in their search to provide the new protagonist of political sociability with certain attributes that would allow his transformation from a monarchist vassal into a republican citizen, sought to delimit and order this school space. Of course, these governmental expectations did not always correspond to the school experience, since not many parishes of the new Republican political-administrative organisation adopted the Lancasterian method ordered by government authorities. However, a common characteristic of the new classrooms, that were established in all the provinces of the Republic, were the educational practices followed in them to transmit the Catholic, civic,

²⁹República de Colombia, “Educación Pública,” 15 September 1822.

³⁰This section has been written based on these sources: The General Congress of the Republic of Colombia, “Constitución de La República de Colombia,” in *Cuerpo de leyes de la República de Colombia. Comprende la constitución y leyes sancionadas por el primer congreso jeneral en las sesiones que celebró desde el 6 de mayo hasta el 14 de octubre de 1821* (Bogotá: Bruno Espinosa Printing in: National Library of Colombia, Fondo Pineda 154, Piece 1, 1822); The General Congress of the Republic of Colombia, “Ley Sobre Establecimiento de Escuelas de Primeras Letras Para Los Niños de Ambos Sexos, Dada El 2 de Agosto de 1821,” in *Cuerpo de leyes de la República de Colombia* (1822); The General Congress of the Republic of Colombia, “Ley sobre aplicación a la enseñanza pública de los bienes de conventos menores dada El 28 de Julio de 1821,” in *Cuerpo de leyes de la República de Colombia* (1822); The General Congress of the Republic of Colombia, “Ley sobre establecimiento de colejos ó casas de educación en las provincias, reforma de las constituciones y planes antiguos y formación de otro nuevo uniforme en toda la República. Dada el 28 de junio de 1821,” in *Cuerpo de Leyes de La República de Colombia* (1822); The General Congress of the Republic of Colombia, “Ley Del 11 de octubre de 1821 sobre extinción de los tributos de los indígenas, distribución de sus resguardos, y esenciones que se les conceden,” in *Cuerpo de Leyes de la República de Colombia* (1822); The General Congress of the Republic of Colombia, “Ley sobre el establecimiento de escuelas de niñas en los conventos de relijiosas dada el 23 de Junio de 1821,” in *Cuerpo de Leyes de La República de Colombia* (1822); Representatives Chamber of the Republic of Colombia, “Oficios de la Cámara de Representantes al Vicepresidente del Ejecutivo, remisorios de proyectos de ley sobre: destinación de edificio para escuela de primeras letras en Riohacha” (General Archive of the Nation, Republic Section, Congress Fund 24, Folios: 821–33, 1824, 1824); Constitutional Congress of the Republic of Colombia, “Decreto del 3 de agosto de 1824 sobre que se proporcione en la ciudad del Rio del Hacha un edificio para la escuela de primeras letras,” in *Colección de las leyes dadas por el Congreso Constitucional de la República de Colombia en las sesiones de los años 1823 y 1824* (Bogota: Manuel María Viller-Calderón printing, en: National Library of Colombia, Fondo Pineda 154, Piece 2, 1826); The General Congress of the Republic of Colombia, “Ley por la que se establecen las reglas que deben guardarse para la concesión de privilegios esclusivos; para la construcción de obras públicas a espensas del tesoro nacional y sobre el modo de proceder en las indemnizaciones de propiedades que se destinan a usos públicos,” in *Colección de leyes dadas por el Congreso Constitucional de la República de Colombia en las sesiones de los años 1823–24* (Bogota: Manuel María Viller-Calderón Printing, 1826); Constitutional Congress of the Republic of Colombia, “Ley sobre organización y arreglo de la instrucción pública,” in *Colección de las leyes dadas por el Congreso Constitucional de la República de Colombia en las sesiones de los años 1825 i 1826* (P. Cubides printing, 1826); and *Lancaster Manual del sistema de enseñanza mutua aplicado a las escuelas primarias de los niños* (1826).

³¹Antonio Viñao Frago, “Historia de La Educación e Historia Cultural. Posibilidades, Problemas, Cuestiones,” *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, no. 0 (1995): 29.

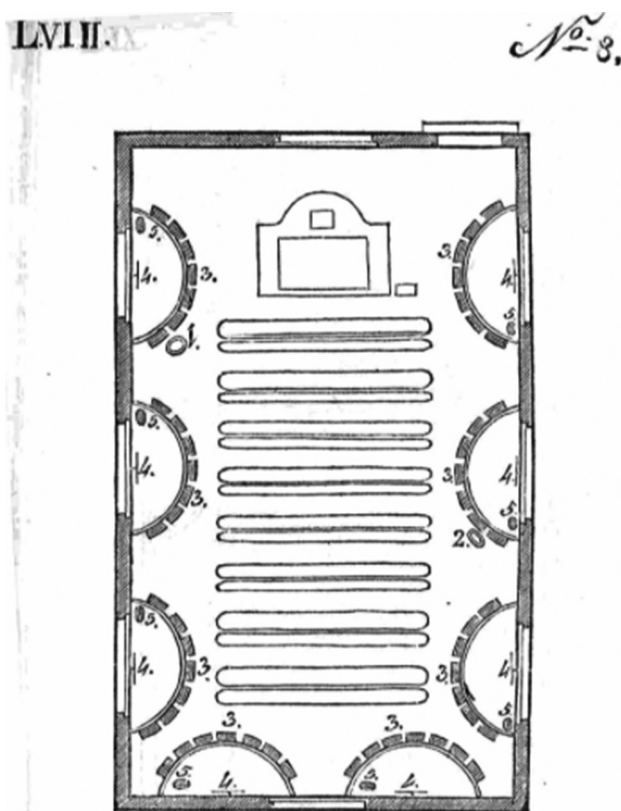


Figure 1. Classroom in the Lancasterian system.

Source: Joaquín Catalá, *Practical manual or compendium of the mutual teaching method, translation of the English and French languages, which has regulated and gives birth to schools in Catalonia and the rest of Spain*: R. Don Joaquín Catalá, presbyter director of the Civic Academy of Barcelona (Barcelona, José Torner Printing, 1821, plate VIII).

and moral education of children with the expectation of giving them the values that the new citizen must possess.

During the creation process of the Republic of Colombia (1819–1830) the classroom was used as the space for the invention of the new political order and constitution of the citizen.³² It must be didactic through educational practices such as literacy, discipline, public examination, and civic moralisation. The educational practices into the classroom had the expectation of organising teacher-student relationships with times, hierarchies, behaviours, and routines. In this sense, the *Manual* of Joseph Lancaster was the document that served as a reference for this process.³³

The expectation of school physiognomy in the Lancaster system was that it be a quiet space, so it was recommended that it be as far away from the population as much as possible. The school had to have a large playground for the gathering and recreation of children, this playground should have walls and be connected to the street, without traffic

³²Caruso, "New Schooling and the Invention of a Political Culture."

³³Lancaster and Institute, *The Lancasterian System of Education, with Improvements*.

through the classrooms to not interrupt classes. Children's hygiene was very important, so the provision of fresh water was imperative for "children to wash their hands and face".³⁴ The Lancaster *Manual* began by describing the central place where the educational process should take place – the classroom – and this decision responds to the strong intention to discipline children that the mutual education system had.

In the *Manual* it was advised to avoid columns and prominences in the classroom, so as not to impede teacher supervision – another indicator of the importance of discipline as a school educational practice. The teacher must be on a wooden platform, from which he saw his students at all times; in the centre of the platform should be his desk and at each end that of the most advanced monitors. The floor must be smooth and avoid wood or stone, since these materials generate noise when walking, which indicates that not only the sight but the word of authority was fundamental within the classroom, so factors that distorted the circulation of one or the other within the enclosure must be avoided.

"The bottom of the windows should be so at least six feet off the ground, so that the light is not uncomfortable, and the wall is free for reading lessons, which are to be hung on it."³⁵ Thus, in front of the posters with reading lessons, hanging on the walls of the classrooms and on the walls of the corridors of the school, the monitors taught their pupils to read.

Between the walls and the banks there should be a distance of six feet to form semicircles for reading; therefore, the banks should occupy only half of the classroom. Both the benches and the tables should be fixed to the floor and should not have a pointed end, to avoid accidents of children. Collective education implied the detriment of individual education (old method) and this change necessitated the invention of a new space for sociability (the classroom) for the educational process to take place collectively: the classroom and each element within this new space had a specific function – the banks, for example, responded to the need to sedentary the child, to give him a fixed place in society.

Regarding time, the Republican classroom, based on the Lancasterian classroom model, was to have a clock on top of the teacher's desk, since the discipline of the Republican citizen implied that he adjusted to specific schedules for specific tasks. In the classroom, students were grouped according to their abilities, both for reading and for arithmetic; in fact, the organisation of the classroom had to change according to whether it was in reading class or in arithmetic class, as the advances and children's abilities in one or the other could be different and therefore demanded a particular organisation.

One of the reasons why children of the eight classes were educated in the same classroom was the vocation of the system to avoid enclosed spaces and to promote transparent spaces, where the look of the person watching was not cut. Individuals should be observed at all times by the authorities. This practice of control and surveillance, of ordering and discipline, was fundamental within the educational system that the authorities of the Republic tried to implement in the schools of first letters to constitute a citizen obedient to the laws and in their intention to teach, through these school educational practices, a *hierarchy of freedom*.³⁶

³⁴Lancaster, *Manual Del Sistema de Enseñanza Mutua Aplicado a Las Escuelas Primarias de Los Niños*, 13.

³⁵Ibid., 14.

³⁶Caruso, "New Schooling and the Invention of a Political Culture," 299.

Thus, the school scenario in the method of mutual teaching had order and discipline as fundamental principles. The Lancasterian classroom had an order, which in turn the Republic wanted to promote, based on merit and discipline. Each individual had their place based on their personal achievements, and all, as in the Bentham panoptic, were seen at all times from the teacher's pulpit or by a partner – monitor – in order, precisely, to preserve the order and the discipline. These materialities (posters on the walls and fixed chairs), time organisation (with structured schedules and watch clocks), and the hierarchical space were important ways to create a citizen body.

In the Bogota Province, in the Central Andes, from the 102 parishes that made up the province, 62 had an elementary school. However, only 19 schools in the province followed the Lancasterian method. These schools were located in one of the most populated cantons, or in the parishes with the largest population under the age of 16, or in the parishes located a few leagues from the capital of the Republic, where representatives of the central government authorities resided. This indicates that compliance with the guidelines of the educational policy of the central republican government generated more resistance from the population as it moved away from the capital city.³⁷

Conclusions

Summarising, after the wars of independence, the need to constitute a new citizen – Catholic, civic, and republican – became a pressing task of educational public policies of the first half of the nineteenth century, and the classroom was the space that government authorities positioned socially with the expectation of simultaneously producing the citizen and the Republic through the transmission of certain political, religious, and, above all, moral attributes.

Despite the financial problems that the foundation and operation of primary schools brought to the Republic under construction, the balance is not negative and positions the Santander government (1821–1827) as a fundamental moment in the history of Colombian education. It can be affirmed that the Republic produced a kind of educational revolution, in terms of geographic coverage, at least in the Province of Bogotá, where almost 70% of parishes had a school by the year 1830. The republican government had to deal with problems related to the foundation, opening, and financing of primary schools, teacher training and hiring, and the publication and circulation of school manuals. The material conditions were not the only worry for the authorities, but also the practices around the organisation and operation of the school space. Thus, Joseph Lancaster's teaching system was used with the expectation of creating the organisational conditions and systematising the interactions that occurred in the classroom with measures such as the homogenisation of the content of the lessons, the permanent visibility of the behaviour of the students, the promotion of attention and the follow-up of norms, rules, and procedures, as well as the hierarchical location of children within the classroom. In the first years of the Republic of Colombia, the implementation of the aforementioned educational practices aimed at the hierarchical distribution of the children's bodies in the classroom and the planning and synchronization of the times in which the children were in the school.³⁸ The aim of all these school educational practices

³⁷Cárdenas-Herrera, "Educación, República y Ciudadanía," 141.

³⁸Caruso, *Classroom Struggle*, vol. 2, 16.

was the constitution of a republican citizen – disciplined, adherent to norms, times, and instructions, and who recognised his place in a highly hierarchical society.

The Lancasterian system was the first educational model in Colombia. However, it was rejected by important social sectors, particularly parents and the Catholic Church, who considered it against civic and religious morality. This paper has described the origin of the classroom in Colombia, which coincides with the very birth of the republican project and with the process of transformation of the vassal into a citizen, within the framework of the transition process from colony to republic between 1819 and 1830. This helps to expand the knowledge about the historical origin of the classroom and contributes to the international discussion of the role of educational models (such as the Lancasterian) in large-scale socio-political transformation.

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