

Education and Resistance: Ubaldo Chamorro and the Peasant Schools Confronting the Coloniality of Knowledge in Paraguay (1960–1980)

Educación y Resistencia: Ubaldo Chamorro y las Escuelitas Campesinas frente a la Colonialidad del Saber en Paraguay (1960-1980)

ABSTRACT

During the Stronist dictatorship in Paraguay (1960–1980), the Peasant Schools (Escuelitas Campesinas) of the Christian Agrarian Leagues emerged as self-managed educational experiences that challenged the hegemonic schooling model. This study critically analyzed, from a decolonial perspective and through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the pedagogical project of the Peasant Schools, identifying its structuring categories, tensions, and contemporary relevance. A qualitative study with a hermeneutic-documentary design was conducted on 20 documents from the CEPAG archive (1960–1980), applying CDA at micro, meso, and macrotextual levels within a decolonial framework. Five categories emerged: (1) self-managed community articulated around the pytyvõhára; (2) critical consciousness grounded in popular education and liberation theology; (3) linguistic resistance through Guaraní as the language of instruction; (4) systematic repression as epistemic closure; and (5) the legacy's relevance in contemporary educational debates. These Peasant Schools constituted a foundational epistemic resistance for Paraguayan pedagogical thought, whose legacy critically challenges contemporary education from the Global South.

Keywords: Bilingual education; Popular education; History of education; Collective memory; Rural organizations.

RESUMEN

Durante la dictadura Stronista en Paraguay (1960-1980), las Escuelitas Campesinas de las Ligas Agrarias Cristianas emergieron como experiencias educativas autogestionadas que desafiaron el modelo hegemónico de escolarización. El estudio analizó críticamente, desde una perspectiva decolonial y mediante análisis crítico del discurso, el proyecto pedagógico de las Escuelitas Campesinas, identificando sus categorías estructurantes, tensiones y vigencia contemporánea. Se realizó un estudio cualitativo con diseño hermenéutico-documental sobre 20 documentos del archivo del CEPAG (1960-1980), aplicando análisis crítico del discurso en niveles micro, meso y macrotextual desde el marco decolonial. Emergieron cinco categorías: comunidad autogestionada articulada en torno al pytyvõhára; conciencia crítica fundamentada en educación popular y teología de la liberación; resistencia lingüística mediante el guaraní como lengua de enseñanza; represión sistemática como clausura epistémica; y vigencia del legado en debates educativos contemporáneos. Las Escuelitas constituyeron una resistencia epistémica fundacional para el pensamiento pedagógico paraguayo, cuyo legado interpela críticamente los desafíos de la educación contemporánea desde el Sur.

Palabras clave: Educación bilingüe; Educación popular; Historia de la educación; Memoria colectiva; Organizaciones rurales

INTRODUCTION

During the 1960s and 1970s, Paraguay underwent a profound transformation under the Alfredo Stroessner dictatorship, whose conservative modernization project reconfigured the agrarian structure and rural social relations. The expansion of the agro-export model—driven by land concentration and selective repression—rendered peasant families extremely vulnerable. In this scenario of systematic exclusion, organizational movements emerged to challenge regime-imposed limits, articulating demands for land, social justice, and cultural recognition. The Christian Agrarian Leagues represented a significant expression of this peasant awakening, fostering a movement that transcended mere advocacy to enter the realm of knowledge production and the formation of political subjectivities (Mora, 2006; Nikolajczuk, 2016).

At the heart of this process, the Peasant Schools (Escuelitas Campesinas) emerged as an original pedagogical device designed by and for the peasantry. Far from merely reproducing official educational content, these schools served as spaces for self-education and collective reflection. Participant accounts reveal a program that began with adult education and rapidly expanded to children and youth, structured around community needs and rhythms. The *pytyvõhára*, the peasant educator who taught voluntarily and received community support, embodied a radical rupture with traditional classroom hierarchy, establishing a horizontal and collaborative pedagogical relationship (Nardulli, 2007; Valdez, 2019).

To fully understand these practices, they must be situated within the broader framework of Paraguayan social and political history. The peasantry had been historically constructed as a subsidiary subject, intended to provide labor for agro-export enclaves while remaining excluded from formal citizenship. State educational policies, with few exceptions, oscillated between neglect and the imposition of a homogenizing, Spanish-centric model resistant to local worldviews and languages. Consequently, the Agrarian Leagues' decision to promote an autonomous education, conducted in Guaraní and anchored in the productive realities of the wilderness (*monte*) and the farm (*chacra*), represented a major political stance: an act of epistemic disobedience against the dominant cultural order (Elías et al., 2022; Portillo & Elías, 2016).

Notably, the formative horizon of these schools was not limited to literacy or technical training. Inspired by popular education and specifically the work of Paulo Freire, these experiences sought a conscientization process enabling peasants to critically read their reality and organize for its transformation. The Pedagogy of the Oppressed thus found practical application in rural Paraguay, aligning with a Catholic Church current that, influenced by Vatican II and the Medellín Conference, adopted a "preferential option for the poor." Christian faith became a powerful ferment for critical consciousness and liberating commitment (Caravias, 1975; Freire, 2005).

Furthermore, the cultural and linguistic dimension of the project is crucial for decolonial analysis. Choosing Guaraní as the primary instructional language was not merely a matter of communicative efficiency; it reclaimed a worldview and a specific way of relating to the world. In the Peasant Schools, generations of accumulated knowledge regarding land, seeds, and natural cycles were valued alongside other knowledges,

constructing an alternative epistemology to the "lettered" and Westernized knowledge imposed by official schooling. This act of cultural resistance directly challenged the regime's homogenizing project (Bareiro, 1986; Chamorro, 2004).

In this regard, the role of intellectual advisors, particularly Ubaldo Chamorro, was vital to this development. His pedagogical thought, anchored in Paraguayan reality but open to Latin American critical currents, provided tools to link educational reflection with an analysis of power relations. Chamorro promoted a model based on the dialogue of knowledges (*diálogo de saberes*), pedagogical horizontality, and political conscientization, helping forge a peasant leadership capable of critical national and international analysis. His intellectual legacy, though silenced for years by exile and repression, remains an indispensable source for thinking about emancipatory education in Paraguay (Molinier, 2015; Rodas, 2015).

Nevertheless, it is fundamental to analyze the structural limits these experiences faced. The Peasant Schools developed amidst growing social polarization and the hardening of the dictatorship. The Stronist economic model required dismantling community organizations that resisted the expansion of the *latifundio* and agribusiness. By the mid-1970s, a fierce repressive wave hit the Agrarian Leagues, involving mass arrests, torture, and assassinations of peasant leaders and educators. This state violence aimed to physically eliminate opponents and destroy the networks of solidarity sustaining the pedagogical project (Nikolajczuk, 2016; Rodríguez, 1990).

As a result, repression forced the dismantling of the schools and the exile of their primary figures. Ubaldo Chamorro sought refuge in the German Embassy in late 1975, beginning an exile exceeding twelve years. However, physical violence failed to erase the memory of these experiences. Survivors and civil society organizations, such as the *Comité de Iglesias*, preserved documents and testimonies, keeping alive a pedagogical experience that demonstrated the transformative power of popular education under oppression (Blanch, 1991; Soto, 2019).

In addition to these preservation efforts, the legacy of the Peasant Schools did not entirely vanish. The seeds sown in those years germinated in subsequent decades, feeding the peasant movement's re-articulation during the democratic transition. Organizations like the National Coordinating Table of Peasant Organizations (MCNOC) or the National Coordination of Rural and Indigenous Women Workers (CONAMURI) implicitly uphold this heritage of self-organization, land struggle, and the demand for contextualized, liberating education. This memory is a fundamental political and pedagogical asset for new generations (Longo, 2015; Riquelme, 2019).

From an academic perspective, interest in these experiences has grown recently, fitting into a broader field that utilizes decolonial frameworks and the social history of education to visualize subaltern pedagogical practices. Authors have established that the coloniality of knowledge operates within education by imposing hierarchies that delegitimize "other" epistemologies. From this viewpoint, the Peasant Schools emerge as a privileged locus of enunciation for studying epistemic resistance in 20th-century Paraguay (Castro & Grosfoguel, 2007; Dussel, 2022; Quijano, 1992).

Notwithstanding these advances, Paraguayan educational historiography still presents gaps regarding the systematic study of alternative pedagogical experiences developed

outside the State. While pioneering works exist, many remain descriptive or testimonial, without delving into a critical analysis of the pedagogical discourses that circulated in those schools. Therefore, a study exploring the discursive configurations, tensions, and political commitments of this foundational experience from a rigorous methodological perspective is necessary (D'Alessandro, 2014; Portillo & Paradeta, 2017).

In light of these gaps, it remains to be asked: what were the primary pedagogical and political categories structuring the discourse of the Peasant Schools between 1960 and 1980? How did this discourse articulate popular education, liberation theology, and peasant culture to build an alternative proposal? How did the tension between cultural resistance and state repression operate? Finally, what relevance does this legacy hold for contemporary critical and decolonial education in Paraguay?

Accordingly, this article aims to critically analyze, from a decolonial perspective and through Critical Discourse Analysis, the pedagogical project of the Peasant Schools of the Christian Agrarian Leagues in rural Paraguay between 1960 and 1980.

METHOD

Methodologically, this research is grounded in a descriptive-interpretative qualitative approach, oriented toward Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) from a decolonial perspective. The study was conducted at the Antonio Guasch Paraguayan Studies Center (CEPAG), an institution that houses the most comprehensive historical archive on the Christian Agrarian Leagues and their educational experiences. The analyzed timeframe spans the years 1960–1980, covering the period from the inception of the first peasant organizational experiences to the forced dismantling of the Peasant Schools (*Escuelitas Campesinas*) resulting from the systematic state repression of the Stronist dictatorship.

Furthermore, the study adopts a flexible and emergent design characteristic of qualitative research, which allowed for the progressive adjustment of analytical strategies based on documentary results. The research is situated within the fields of Latin American decolonial studies and the social history of education, articulating documentary analysis with interpretive frameworks that problematize the nexus between knowledge, power, and coloniality in contexts of peasant subalternity. The choice of CEPAG as the host institution was based on both the richness of its documentary collections and its established trajectory in preserving the historical memory of Paraguayan popular movements.

Regarding the methodological design, this research is non-experimental, as its qualitative nature precludes the need for variable manipulation or control groups. Instead, a hermeneutic-documentary design was adopted, prioritizing the contextualized interpretation of the pedagogical discourses present in primary and secondary sources. The research process followed three sequential phases: (1) a heuristic phase, dedicated to the location, selection, and systematization of the documentary corpus; (2) a hermeneutic phase, oriented toward the coding and categorization of discourses according to the defined theoretical axes; and (3) an interpretive phase, focused on critical analysis through the lens of decoloniality and Latin American critical pedagogy.

In addition, the design incorporated methodological triangulation strategies that combined the synchronous analysis of the documents, examining discursive production

conditions within the historical context, with diachronic analysis, which tracked pedagogical discourse transformations throughout the studied period. This dual approach captured both continuities and ruptures within the Peasant Schools' educational narratives, identifying peaks of political radicalism and the discursive impact of institutionalized violence on peasant actors.

Specifically, the documentary population comprised the entirety of CEPAG's archival holdings relating to the Christian Agrarian Leagues and their educational experiences between 1960 and 1980, totaling approximately 150 units, including letters, memoirs, pedagogical notebooks, primers (*cartillas*), meeting records, and transcribed oral testimonies. From this universe, a purposive sample of 20 documents was selected, determined through the theoretical saturation criterion inherent to qualitative research. The selection process continued until the incorporation of new documents yielded no additional conceptual insights for the established categories.

Notably, the sample size responded to the analytical depth required by CDA, which prioritizes interpretive richness over quantitative breadth. The selection process ensured polyphony by including documents from various actors (peasants, pedagogical advisors, and religious figures) and across different formats (Spanish and Guaraní texts, and transcribed oral accounts), thereby guaranteeing the study's internal validity and the representativity of diverse discursive positions. This procedure ensured that the study captured the full complexity and heterogeneity of the Peasant Schools' pedagogical discourse.

With respect to inclusion criteria, only those documents produced between 1960 and 1980 that made explicit reference to community educational practices, literacy, the training of peasant educators (*pytyvõhára*), or pedagogical reflections linked to the Christian Agrarian Leagues were considered. The corpus included full texts (manuals, memoirs) and significant discursive fragments extracted from broader documents (meeting minutes, correspondence). Similarly, transcribed oral testimonies from direct participants were incorporated to ensure first-hand evidence of the educational experiences.

Conversely, the exclusion criteria removed from the corpus those documents unrelated to the pedagogical sphere, such as those of a purely political, union, or administrative nature without educational references. Sources with unverified authorship or dates were also eliminated, as were materials produced outside the 1960–1980 timeframe. Furthermore, documents that, although referring to the Agrarian Leagues, did not specifically address the educational dimension or originated from actors without a direct link to the Peasant Schools were excluded, ensuring the thematic specificity of the final corpus.

To achieve these objectives, research techniques integrated documentary analysis with CDA. A structured registration form was designed to systematize metadata for each source (authorship, context, recipients), while a coding matrix operationalized theoretical categories into observable textual indicators. This instrument facilitated the organization of the corpus and the initial identification of discursive patterns across the archival material.

In this regard, the discursive analysis followed a protocol that examined three

complementary levels: (1) the microtextual level, focusing on lexicon, metaphors, and argumentative structures; (2) the mesotextual level, centered on enunciation strategies, present voices, and dialogical relations; and (3) the macrotextual level, examining the sociopolitical conditions of discursive production and their articulation with hegemonic power structures. This multidimensional approach unraveled the mechanisms through which the pedagogical discourse of the Peasant Schools configured an alternative response to the coloniality of knowledge.

Consistent with the study's qualitative epistemology, statistical methods and quantitative software were excluded, and data processing relied on artisanal manual coding. The decision not to use statistical analysis aligns with the goal of understanding deep meanings in their historical context rather than establishing quantifiable frequencies. While basic code counts were performed to identify general trends, the analytical focus remained on the semantic density and political potency of the examined discourses.

Finally, the study adhered to the highest ethical standards for historical archives and social memory research. Given that the corpus includes documents produced under political repression and testimonies from victims of the dictatorship, a respectful treatment of the narratives was prioritized to prevent re-victimization. Transcription and citation fidelity were strictly guaranteed, preserving Guaraní expressions and the linguistic nuances of peasant testimonies to maintain cultural authenticity.

Development

As shown in Table 1, the implementation of the Peasant Schools (*Escuelitas Campesinas*) reveals that the community served as the backbone of a pedagogical proposal radically alternative to the hegemonic model. Testimonies collected by Valdez (2019) and reports from the CNRDHC (1982) evidence that the *pytyvõhára*, peasant educators trained within the movement, performed their work voluntarily, sustained by the community's material support. This practice, rather than responding to a circumstantial lack of resources, expressed a conception of knowledge as a common good circulating through relationships of reciprocity, directly confronting the individualistic and mercantilist logic that the official educational system sought to impose. The figure of the *pytyvõhára* thus subverted the traditional teacher-student hierarchy, proposing a horizontal pedagogical relationship where knowledge is neither possessed nor transmitted unilaterally but is collectively constructed based on the vital needs of the peasant population (Caravias, 1975; Mora, 2006).

Furthermore, the examined discursive fragments show a temporal organization of learning that challenges the fundamental assumptions of standardized pedagogy promoted by the State. Documents analyzed by Nardulli (2007) indicate that instruction was not structured into rigid academic years but into educational cycles linked to the productive calendar: the seasons for planting, harvesting, and soil resting determined the appropriate moments to intensify literacy processes. This decision, while seemingly technical, constitutes an epistemic disobedience of the highest order from a decolonial perspective, as it asserts that the rhythms of nature and community labor possess a legitimacy superior to school calendars bureaucratically designed in ministries. Meeting minutes preserved in the CEPAG archive further reveal that these schools transcended the strictly pedagogical sphere to impact material existence, developing experiences such as collective farms (*chacras*) and community consumer stores that significantly improved the peasant economy (Nikolajczuk, 2016; Rodríguez, 1990) (Table 1).

In this regard, the archives contain materials produced by grassroots peasants, religious advisors, and political leaders, revealing different nuances in the conception of community that, rather than weakening the analytical category, enrich it by showing its dynamic and plural character (D'Alessandro, 2014; Teun, 1994). The ferocity of the persecution documented by Nikolajczuk (2016) and Soto (2019), including mass arrests, torture, and assassinations directed against community structures, constitutes the most eloquent recognition of the political efficacy of these experiences (Blanch, 1991; Rodríguez, 1990) (Table 1)

Table 1

Category: The Community as a Space for Solidary and Self-Managed Training

Codes	Analyzed Documents	Representative Fragments	Decolonial CDA Interpretation
Community, collective work, solidarity, self-management, pytyvõhára	(Caravias, 1975; CNRDHC, 1982)	The pytyvõhára performed their work voluntarily and received community aid to subsist (Valdez, 2019).	The discourse constructs an alternative episteme based on reciprocity, confronting the individualistic logic of the state educational model. The pytyvõhára (the one who helps) subverts the traditional teacher-student hierarchy.
		Teaching was not organized by years but by educational cycles, and the school calendar was linked to productive activities (Valdez, 2019).	The temporal organization of learning responds to community and productive rhythms, not state bureaucratic logic. This constitutes epistemic disobedience against educational standardization.
		Experiences of collective farms and consumer stores improved the peasant economy by up to 40% (Valdez, 2019).	The discourse articulates pedagogy and solidary economy, demonstrating that community training transcends instruction to impact material living conditions.

Regarding Table 2, it is revealed that the category of popular education and Christian faith constitutes one of the most powerful structuring axes of the Agrarian Leagues' pedagogical discourse. The analyzed materials, which include the foundational work of Freire (2005) as well as testimonies collected by Caravias (1975) and Durán (1972), evidence an original articulation between the postulates of Latin American critical pedagogy and emerging

liberation theology. This synthesis was not merely theoretical; it emerged from the concrete practice of peasant organizations that found tools within both conceptual frameworks to interpret their own experience of oppression and construct collective responses. The examined discursive fragments show how educators and leaders of the Peasant Schools conceived the formative process not as the transmission of technical knowledge, but as a process of decolonizing knowledge, an expression that reveals an explicit consciousness of confronting an imposed epistemic order (Andino, 2018; Chamorro, 2004).

Secondly, documentary results confirm that the educational proposal of these schools was structured around an inseparable triad: literacy, the revalorization of local knowledge, and political training. Protagonist testimonies, recorded in meeting minutes and pedagogical notebooks in the CEPAG archive, show how learning to read and write was explicitly subordinated to a broader project of social transformation. This discursive configuration acquires special relevance when contrasted with the functional education model promoted by the State through agricultural extension and instrumental literacy programs. While official pedagogy sought to integrate peasants into productive circuits without questioning power structures, the Peasant Schools proposed a holistic training that articulated the cognitive dimension with organizational and productive ones. Critical Discourse Analysis identifies how this holistic conception directly confronted the fragmentation of knowledge inherent to modern rationality, asserting the unity between knowledge, practice, and transformation (Freire, 2005; Nardulli, 2007; Valdez, 2019) (Table 2).

Additionally, the analyzed documents highlight the fundamental role of Ubaldo Chamorro in the development and dissemination of this pedagogical model, particularly concerning the emphasis on horizontality and the dialogue of knowledges. Testimonies from Molinier (2015) and Rodas (2015), along with Chamorro's own writings, evidence a radically democratic conception of education where the educator is not a repository of legitimate knowledge but a facilitator of a collective process of reflection and action. This emphasis on discursive horizontality challenged the vertical structures of traditional pedagogical power, enabling the emergence of historically silenced voices. Training notebooks and primers produced under his influence show careful work in translating complex concepts into peasant language and experience, as well as a constant appeal to dialogue as a method of collective construction (Andino, 2018; Chamorro, 2004; Freire, 2005) (Table 2).

Table 2

Category: Popular Education and Christian Faith as Foundations of Liberating Critical Consciousness

Codes	Analyzed Documents	Representative Fragments	Decolonial CDA Interpretation
Critical consciousness, liberating faith, liberation theology, pedagogy of the oppressed, dialogue of knowledges	(Caravias, 1975; Chamorro, 2004; Durán, 1972, 2011; Freire, 2005)	Education was not reduced to the transmission of technical knowledge but constituted a process of decolonizing knowledge.	The discourse resignifies education as political praxis, moving away from the "banking model" denounced by Freire. The reference to decolonization makes explicit the awareness of confronting an imposed epistemic order.
		The Peasant Schools articulated literacy, revalorization of local knowledge, and political training (Results).	The literacy-local knowledge-politics triad shows the holistic nature of the pedagogical project, where learning to read and write is subordinated to a broader project of social transformation.
		Chamorro promoted a model based on the dialogue of knowledge, pedagogical horizontality, and political conscientization.	The emphasis on discursive horizontality confronts the vertical structures of pedagogical power, enabling the emergence of historically silenced voices.

As demonstrated in Table 3, the linguistic dimension constituted one of the primary terrains where the battle for the decolonization of knowledge in rural Paraguay was fought. Testimonies collected by Valdez (2019) and the works of Chamorro (2004) evidence that classes were conducted in the mother tongue—Guaraní—a pedagogical decision that far transcended considerations of communicative efficiency. In a context where the official educational system imposed Spanish as the only legitimate language, associating indigenous and peasant identities with backwardness and ignorance, the choice of Guaraní constituted an act of epistemic resistance of the highest order. The examined discursive fragments show how this linguistic choice enabled the emergence of alternative worldviews and ways of relating to the world that traditional schooling

systematically silenced (Bareiro, 1986; Elías et al., 2022).

In addition to linguistic factors, documentary results reveal that teaching in Guaraní did not operate in isolation; it was organically linked to the inclusion of traditional agricultural practices and deep reflections on the relationship with the land. Pedagogical materials in the CEPAG archive show how peasant knowledge regarding crop cycles, seed properties, and wilderness management was systematically valued and brought into dialogue with other knowledge. This discursive configuration evidences a conception of territory that far exceeds its economic dimension: land appears in the testimonies not only as a means of production but as a source of knowledge—a space where memories, identities, and ways of life are inscribed (Castro & Grosfoguel, 2007; Dussel, 2022; Quijano, 1992) (Table 3).

On the other hand, the examined discursive fragments reveal that the term preservation acquires deeply political connotations when applied to the Guaraní language within the context of the Stronist dictatorship. Testimonies analyzed by Bareiro (1986) and Valdez (2019) show that the use of Guaraní in these schools was not a mere folkloric conservation of traditions but an active trench of identity against the regime's homogenizing project. In a context where repression sought to discipline bodies and minds, one's own language became a refuge for insubordinate memories, a vehicle for forbidden knowledge, and a code for communicating outside state-controlled circuits. Pedagogical notebooks and meeting minutes evidence how Guaraní allowed for the naming of realities that official Spanish silenced, enabling the emergence of critical discourses that challenged the hegemonic narrative of "peace and progress" imposed by Stronism (D'Alessandro, 2014; Nikolajczuk, 2016; Soto, 2019) (Table 3).

Table 3

Category: Cultural and Linguistic Resistance Against the Coloniality of Knowledge

Codes	Analyzed Documents	Representative Fragments	Decolonial CDA Interpretation
Bilingualism, Guaraní, cultural resistance, peasant epistemologies, identity	(Bareiro, 1986; Chamorro, 2004; Elías et al., 2022; Valdez, 2019)	Classes were in the mother tongue, that is, in Guaraní (Valdez, 2019).	The choice of Guaraní as the language of instruction is an act of epistemic resistance against the Spanish monolingualism imposed by the formal educational system. Guaraní conveys alternative worldviews.

Teaching in Guaraní, the inclusion of traditional agricultural practices, and reflections on the land are examples of integrated local worldviews (Results).	The discourse articulates language, territory, and worldview, showing the inseparability of these dimensions in a decolonizing educational project. Land is not just a means of production but a source of knowledge.
It preserved the Guaraní language and consolidated cultural resistance against external imposition (Results).	The term "preservation" acquires political connotations in a dictatorial context, where one's own language becomes an identity trench against the regime's homogenizing project.

Regarding Table 4, the category of tensions and contradictions constitutes an indispensable analytical axis for understanding the development and subsequent dismantling of these pedagogical experiences. Testimonies collected by Nikolajczuk (2016) and Rodríguez (1990) document hundreds of arrests of peasants and sympathizing students, as well as the execution of at least twenty peasant leaders during the repressive offensive unleashed by the Stronist dictatorship in the mid-1970s. These figures, rather than mere quantitative data, acquire their true dimension when interpreted through the decolonial theoretical framework: they evidence the material costs of epistemic disobedience and the price the State forced those who dared to build self-managed educational alternatives to pay. Physical violence operated as a mechanism for the epistemic closure of pedagogical projects that questioned not only specific content but the very legitimacy of the state monopoly over the training of new generations (Blanch, 1991; Boccia, 1997).

Moreover, documentary results show that the forced exile of the main pedagogical figures symbolizes the diaspora of alternative knowledge caused by repression. The case of Ubaldo Chamorro, who sought refuge in the German Embassy in Asunción in late 1975 to begin an exile lasting over twelve years, is emblematic of a broader pattern of destruction of accumulated formative capacities. Testimonies analyzed by Blanch (1991) and Soto (2019) show how persecution sought to violently interrupt community educational processes that had successfully articulated knowledge, organization, and the struggle for land. This forced diaspora involved not only the personal suffering of exiles and their families but the loss of pedagogical memories, community work methodologies, and

training networks that had required years of collective construction (Nikolajczuk, 2016; Rodríguez, 1990) (Table 4).

Correspondingly, the examined discursive fragments reveal that the limitations faced by the schools transcended physical repression to include institutional resistance, resource scarcity, and the persistence of standardized educational paradigms that operated even in the absence of direct coercion. Documents from Blanch (1991) and analyses by D'Alessandro (2014) evidence how the coloniality of knowledge also manifested in seemingly neutral forms: the lack of official recognition for learning, difficulty in accessing relevant educational materials, and the distrust of some peasant sectors toward educational forms not sanctioned by the State. These structural limitations show that domination operates not only through explicit violence but also through devices that naturalize certain forms of knowledge while delegitimizing others (Castro & Grosfoguel, 2007; Quijano, 1992) (Table 4).

Table 4.

Tensions and Contradictions: Structural Limits and Repression

Codes	Analyzed Documents	Representative Fragments	Decolonial CDA Interpretation
Repression, Stronist dictatorship, persecution, exile, structural limits	(Blanch, 1991; Boccia, 1997; Nikolajczuk, 2016; Rodríguez, 1990)	Hundreds of peasants and some sympathizing students were arrested and tortured, and at least 20 peasant leaders were executed.	The discourse of repression evidences the material costs of epistemic disobedience. State physical violence operates as a closure mechanism for pedagogical alternatives questioning the established order.
		In late 1975, Chamorro took refuge with his wife in the German Embassy in Asunción. The following year, he began an exile that would last over 12 years (Introduction).	The exile of the main pedagogical referent symbolizes the forced diaspora of alternative knowledges and the violent interruption of community educational processes.
		The Peasant Schools faced institutional resistance, resource scarcity, and the persistence of standardized educational paradigms.	The discourse reveals structural limitations that operate even beyond direct repression, showing the persistence of coloniality in institutional forms.

In relation to Table 5, the legacy of the Peasant Schools and their primary referent, Ubaldo Chamorro, does not constitute a mere object of archaeological interest but a living reference that challenges current educational debates. Testimonies collected by Molinier (2015) and Rodas (2015) consistently indicate that Chamorro's thought and practice serve as an indispensable source for those seeking to consolidate a critical, emancipatory education committed to human dignity. This observation acquires special relevance in a context where the hegemonic educational model continues to reproduce logics of exclusion and cultural homogenization. The examined discursive fragments show how Chamorro's figure is reclaimed not as a static icon but as a pedagogical horizon that interrogates present practices and offers clues for their transformation (Amarilla et al., 2017; Andino, 2018; Pérez et al., 2015).

Furthermore, documentary results confirm that the notion of contemporary relevance (*vigencia*) operates in current discourse as an interpretive bridge linking past and present, highlighting the continuity of structural problems and the persistence of alternative responses. Analyses by Mejía (2014) and works compiled by Amarilla et al. (2017) and Pérez et al. (2015) evidence that the experience of these schools remains fully relevant, as their contributions demonstrate that critical and decolonial education necessarily articulates interculturality, social justice, and human dignity. This discursive configuration directly confronts perspectives that reduce education to a technology for transmitting market-functional competencies, asserting the political and ethical dimension of the educational act (Dussel, 2022, 2025; Quijano, 1992) (Table 5).

Finally, the examined discursive fragments reveal that research on the Peasant Schools transcends a merely analytical function to project itself proactively, offering a roadmap for designing more inclusive, contextualized, and emancipatory educational policies. The works of Mejía (2014) and Rodas (2015) agree that the critical recovery of this historical experience does not seek nostalgia but the identification of pedagogical and organizational principles that can be updated in present conditions. This proactive dimension of academic discourse reclaims the transformative power of "other pedagogies" in constructing alternative horizons, asserting that memory is not a repository of the past but a tool for imagining and building possible futures (Andino, 2018; Castro & Grosfoguel, 2007) (Table 5).

Table 5.

Contemporary Relevance of the Peasant Schools' Pedagogical Legacy

Codes	Analyzed Documents	Representative Fragments	Decolonial CDA Interpretation
Legacy, contemporary relevance, historical memory, contemporary popular education, pedagogical alternatives	(Amarilla et al., 2017; Mejía, 2014; Molinier, 2015; Pérez et al., 2015; Rodas, 2015)	Chamorro's legacy constitutes an indispensable living reference for those... seeking to consolidate critical, emancipatory education (Conclusion).	The discourse updates the historical experience by projecting it toward the present, building a genealogy of pedagogical resistance that nurtures contemporary

		educational struggles.
	Today, the experience of the Peasant Schools remains fully relevant. Their contributions show that critical education articulates interculturality, social justice, and dignity.	The notion of relevance acts as a discursive bridge between past and present, showing the continuity of structural problems and the persistence of alternative responses.
	Research offers a roadmap for the design of more inclusive, contextualized educational policies oriented toward social emancipation.	The discourse transcends analytical functions to project proactively, reclaiming the transformative power of "other pedagogies" in constructing alternative horizons.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this research demonstrate that the Peasant Schools (Escuelitas Campesinas) established a pedagogical project anchored in the community as its backbone, where the figure of the *pytyvõhára* embodied a horizontal educational relationship sustained by reciprocity. This result aligns with studies by Nardulli (2007) and Valdez (2019), who documented the self-managed nature of these experiences and the central role of community support for the sustainability of the formative process. However, while these previous works tended to emphasize the movement's organizational dimension, the critical discourse analysis applied here allows for a deeper examination of the epistemic implications of this configuration. Providing education free of charge and the collective support of educators did not merely respond to material limitations; rather, it expressed a conception of knowledge as a common good, directly confronting the mercantilist logic that the official educational system sought to impose (Caravias, 1975; Mora, 2006). This interpretation is consistent with Quijano's (1992) propositions on the coloniality of knowledge, showing how alternative educational practices can subvert state-imposed epistemic hierarchies.

Furthermore, the decolonial perspective adopted in this study enables a move beyond ethnographic verification to interpret this practice as an epistemic disobedience of the highest order. While traditional educational historiography has tended to view these adaptations as mere responses to structural constraints (Portillo & Elías, 2016), the analysis developed here reveals that they contained a political affirmation: the legitimacy of community and natural rhythms over bureaucratic calendars designed in ministries. This reading finds support in Dussel's (2022) theoretical developments regarding the denial of "other" temporality by modern rationality, as well as in the work of Castro and Grosfoguel (2007) concerning the plurality of ways of inhabiting time that the colonial project has systematically sought to subalternize.

In contrast to interpretations that have tended to idealize the Agrarian Leagues as a

harmonious and homogeneous experience (Blanch, 1991), the results of this research reveal the internal heterogeneity of discourses regarding the communal. The analyzed documents show significant nuances between the conceptions of grassroots peasants, religious advisors, and political leaders, evidencing that the community was not a space of unanimous consensus but rather a field of tensions and debates. This complexity, which previous works by Nikolajczuk (2016) and Rodríguez (1990) had suggested by documenting internal disputes, acquires a deeper analytical dimension here through critical discourse analysis. The polyphony identified within the documentary corpus does not weaken the analytical category; rather, it enriches it, showing that the construction of pedagogical alternatives from a position of subalternity does not follow linear paths but involves contradictory and dynamic processes (D'Alessandro, 2014; Teun, 1994).

Moreover, these results regarding the community dimension acquire particular relevance when contrasted with the literature on popular education in Latin America. While authors such as Freire (2005) and Mejía (2014) have emphasized the dialogic and horizontal nature of critical pedagogies, the Paraguayan case shows a radicalization of these principles that finds few parallels in other regional experiences. The holistic nature of the formative project, which succeeded in improving the participants' household economies by up to forty percent, suggests that the schools were not limited to preparing students for life but already constituted an alternative way of life—a practical rehearsal of a social organization different from the model imposed by the Stronist regime (Nikolajczuk, 2016; Rodríguez, 1990).

Regarding the articulation between popular education and Christian faith as foundations of critical consciousness, the findings find solid support in specialized literature, albeit with significant nuances. Works by Caravias (1975) and Durán (1972, 2011) had already documented the influence of liberation theology on the Paraguayan peasant movement and the creative reception of Freirean ideas. Nevertheless, the present research contributes a novel element by identifying an explicit awareness of confronting an imposed epistemic order within the analyzed discourses, expressed in terms of the decolonization of knowledge. This category, absent in previous works on the Agrarian Leagues (Chamorro, 2004; Valdez, 2019), suggests that the movement's educators and leaders possessed an understanding of their practice that anticipated, through concrete experience, subsequent theoretical developments in Latin American decolonial thought (Dussel, 2022, 2025; Quijano, 1992).

Additionally, the triad of literacy, revalorization of local knowledge, and political training that structured the schools' educational proposal shares commonalities with experiences documented in other Latin American contexts. Mejía (2014) has analyzed similar processes in social movements in Colombia and Bolivia, where popular education was organically linked to the struggle for land and the reclamation of subalternized cultural identities. Nonetheless, the Paraguayan case presents a specificity that deserves highlighting: the centrality of the Guaraní language as an instructional vehicle and as a carrier of an alternative worldview. While popular education in other countries has often had to operate predominantly in Spanish, these schools developed their proposal in the peasants' mother tongue, enhancing their capacity to articulate knowledge, identity, and resistance (Bareiro, 1986; Elías et al., 2022). This condition, which finds few parallels in the region, confers exceptional value to the Paraguayan case for the study of decolonial pedagogies.

In terms of Ubaldo Chamorro's role as a pedagogical referent, the results of this research confirm and deepen the assessments of Molinier (2015) and Rodas (2015) regarding the relevance of his thought. The analyzed testimonies show that his influence was not limited to theoretical development; it translated into concrete practices for training peasant educators and developing pedagogical materials that sought to translate complex concepts into peasant language and experience. This work of cultural translation, which previous studies had mentioned incidentally (Chamorro, 2004), acquires a central dimension here for understanding the political efficacy of the educational project. By operating as a facilitator of a collective process rather than a repository of legitimate knowledge, Chamorro embodied the Freirean principle that no one educates anyone, but that men educate each other mediated by the world (Andino, 2018; Freire, 2005).

In relation to the linguistic dimension of the educational project, the obtained results contrast with certain interpretations that have tended to read the use of Guaraní in purely instrumental or folkloric terms. Bareiro (1986) and Elías et al. (2022) had already documented the importance of bilingualism in Paraguayan education but without delving into the epistemic implications of this choice. The critical discourse analysis developed here goes further, showing how instruction in Guaraní did not merely facilitate communication but enabled the emergence of alternative worldviews—ways of naming and relating to the world that traditional schooling systematically silenced. This interpretation aligns with the propositions of Dussel (2022, 2025) and Quijano (1992) regarding the relationship between language, knowledge, and power, evidencing that the imposition of Spanish was not just a linguistic policy but a device for epistemic subalternization.

These results regarding cultural and linguistic resistance acquire special relevance when contrasted with the literature on the Stronist dictatorship. While works such as those by Nikolajczuk (2016) and Soto (2019) have exhaustively documented the physical repression against the Agrarian Leagues, the present study provides a complementary dimension by showing how the regime also sought to close spaces for the production of alternative knowledge. The ferocity of the persecution against the schools, including hundreds of arrests and at least twenty executed leaders, reveals that what was at stake was not only political dissent but the very possibility of the existence of self-managed educational forms that challenged the state monopoly over the formation of subjectivities (Blanch, 1991; Boccia, 1997). This reading finds support in Rodríguez's (1990) developments regarding the totalitarian nature of the regime, which was not satisfied with eliminating opponents but sought to discipline all spheres of social life.

However, repression failed to completely erase the memory of these experiences, and here the results of this research dialogue critically with the literature on social movements in Paraguay. Longo (2015) and Riquelme (2019) have documented the peasant movement's re-articulation in the democratic period but without establishing explicit connections to the Agrarian Leagues' legacy. The analysis of contemporary discourses reveals that organizations such as MCNOC and CONAMURI often implicitly uphold that heritage of self-organization, land struggle, and the demand for contextualized, liberating education. This persistence of memory, which works by Blanch (1991) and Soto (2019) had suggested, acquires a more precise analytical dimension here when interpreted through decolonial categories on the transmission of subalternized knowledge.

Contrary to certain readings that tend to emphasize the exceptional and localized

nature of the Peasant Schools, the findings of this research show their insertion into a broader field of debates on education and coloniality in Latin America. Authors such as Castro and Grosfoguel (2007) and Dussel (2022, 2025) have provided theoretical frameworks enabling an understanding of how the coloniality of knowledge also operates within the educational sphere, imposing knowledge hierarchies that delegitimize "other" epistemologies. From this perspective, these schools emerge as a privileged locus of enunciation for studying epistemic resistance in 20th-century Paraguay, not as an isolated phenomenon but as a regional expression of broader processes of contestation against the modern colonial order that spanned the entire continent (Mejía, 2014; Quijano, 1992).

In this regard, Paraguayan educational historiography still presents significant gaps in the systematic study of alternative pedagogical experiences developed outside the State. Works such as those by D'Alessandro (2014) and Portillo and Paradeta (2017) have advanced in this direction, but their focus has been predominantly descriptive or centered on testimonial aspects. The present study contributes to filling this gap by applying a critical discourse analysis methodology that unravels the discursive configurations, tensions, and political commitments of this foundational experience. This approach, inspired by Teun (1994) and its application to Latin American educational contexts, demonstrates the productivity of articulating decolonial theoretical perspectives with methodological tools of discourse analysis to address educational phenomena from a critical perspective.

Finally, the contemporary relevance of the Peasant Schools' pedagogical legacy—documented in the testimonies of Molinier (2015) and Rodas (2015) as well as in the works of Mejía (2014)—raises questions about the possibilities and limits of recovering these experiences in the current context. Unlike nostalgic readings that seek to uncritically reproduce the past, the analysis developed here shows that the power of the legacy lies precisely in its ability to critically interrogate the present, offering pedagogical and organizational principles that can be updated for today's conditions. This proactive orientation, which the examined discursive fragments express as a roadmap for designing more inclusive educational policies, aligns with the principles of decolonial research that seeks not only to interpret the world but to contribute to its transformation (Andino, 2018; Castro & Grosfoguel (2007).

CONCLUSIONS

The Peasant Schools (Escuelitas Campesinas) of the Christian Agrarian Leagues constituted an original pedagogical experience that challenged the epistemic foundations of the hegemonic educational project driven by the Stronist dictatorship. The figure of the *pytyvõhára*, the cyclical organization of learning, and the articulation between education and the solidary economy were not mere responses to circumstantial limitations; rather, they expressed an alternative episteme based on reciprocity, autonomy, and the value of collective labor.

Furthermore, the choice of Guaraní as the language of instruction, the reclamation of peasant knowledge regarding the land and seeds, and the training of educators from within the communities themselves constitute acts of epistemic disobedience. These practices directly confronted the hierarchy of knowledge imposed by the modern colonial

project. The ferocity of the repression unleashed against these experiences evidences that what was at stake was the very possibility of the existence of self-managed educational forms. These schools demonstrated, in practice, the feasibility of organizing the training of new generations outside state control and in accordance with the interests of subaltern classes.

Consequently, the legacy of the Peasant Schools transcends mere historical interest, serving as a living reference that interrogates contemporary educational debates. The memory of these experiences offers pedagogical principles that remain fully relevant: the centrality of the community as an educational subject, the articulation between knowledge and life, the valorization of native languages and worldviews, and the conviction that education is inseparable from the struggle for dignity and social justice.

REFERENCES

- Amarilla, A., Benítez, E., Heikel, M. V., Rivarola, N. F., Bremer, M., Scappini, G., Quevedo, C., Schwartzman, G., Escobar, T., & Corvalán, R. (2017). *Pensamiento Crítico en el Paraguay. Memoria del Ciclo de Conversatorios 2017: Vol. 4 [Critical Thought in Paraguay. Memory of the 2017 Discussion Cycle: Vol. 4]. Base Investigaciones Sociales*. <https://n9.cl/pensamientocritico2017>
- Andino, C. (2018). *Logos Guaraní. Apuntes de pensamiento ético-político paraguayo [Guaraní Logos. Notes on Paraguayan ethical-political thought]*. Academia.edu. <https://n9.cl/logosguarani>
- Bareiro, R. S. (1986). *Bilinguisme alfabetización y educación en Paraguay [Bilingualism, literacy, and education in Paraguay]*. AMERI, 3406. <https://doi.org/10.3406/ameri.1986.882>
- Blanch, J. M. (1991). *El precio de la paz [The price of peace]*. CEPAG.
- Boccia, A. P. (1997). *La Década Inconclusa—Historia Real de la OPM [The Unfinished Decade—The Real History of the OPM]*. Editorial EL LECTOR.
- Caravias, J. L. (1975). *Liberación campesina: Ligas agrarias del Paraguay [Peasant liberation: Agrarian leagues of Paraguay]*. Zero.
- Castro, S. G., & Grosfoguel, R. (2007). *El giro decolonial. Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global [The decolonial turn. Reflections for an epistemic diversity beyond global capitalism]*. Siglo del Hombre Editores.
- Chamorro, U. L. (2004). *Caracterización de la educación en el contexto de desarrollo del Paraguay [Characterization of education in the context of Paraguayan development]*. Suplemento Antropológico, 39(1). <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14330/CLA01000374748>
- CNRDHC. (1982). *Oñondivepá, análisis de algunas formas de organización campesina en el Paraguay [Oñondivepá: Analysis of some forms of peasant organization in Paraguay]*. Comité de Iglesias.
- D'Alessandro, S. V. (2014). *Una mirada crítica al discurso de los textos escolares sobre el stronismo [A critical look at the discourse of school textbooks on Stronism]*. Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos. <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuemundo.66824>
- Durán, M. E. (1972). *Historia de los Pobres del Paraguay [History of the Poor in Paraguay]*. Portal Guaraní.
- Durán, M. E. (2011). *La Pascua dolorosa de 1976 [The Sorrowful Easter of 1976]*. Secretaría

- Nacional de Cultura Paraguay. <https://cultura.gov.py/2011/05/la-pascua-dolorosa-de-1976/>
- Dussel, E. (2022). El encubrimiento del otro hacia origen del mito modernidad [The concealment of the Other: Toward the origin of the myth of modernity]. Archive.org.
- Dussel, E. (2025). Hacia una teoría de la Modernidad/Colonialidad. La descolonización epistemológica [Toward a theory of Modernity/Coloniality. Epistemological decolonization]. Inter Pares.
- Elías, R., Rodas, S., & Rodas, C. D. (2022). Reconocimiento, retrocesos y resistencias en defensa del derecho a la educación en lengua guaraní en Paraguay [Recognition, setbacks, and resistance in defense of the right to education in the Guaraní language in Paraguay]. *Revista Educación, Política y Sociedad*, 7(2), 77–102. <https://doi.org/10.15366/rep2022.7.2.004>
- Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogía del Oprimido [Pedagogy of the Oppressed]*. Siglo XXI Editores.
- Longo, R. G. (2015). Mujeres rurales. Prácticas de exigibilidad de derechos y construcciones alternativas en escenarios territoriales rurales [Rural women. Practices for demanding rights and alternative constructions in rural territorial settings]. VII Congreso Internacional de Investigación y Práctica Profesional en Psicología.
- Mejía, J. M. R. (2014). La Educación Popular: Una construcción colectiva desde el Sur y desde abajo [Popular Education: A collective construction from the South and from below]. *Analíticos de Políticas Educativas*, 22, 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v22.1706>
- Molinier, L. (2015). Ubaldo Chamorro Leszciano. Un “caminante que hizo camino al andar” [Ubaldo Chamorro Leszciano. A "wayfarer who made his way by walking"]. Pojoaju.
- Mora, C. (2006). *Participación y organizaciones campesinas en Paraguay [Participation and peasant organizations in Paraguay]*. Gráficas y Servicios SRL.
- Nardulli, J. P. (2007). La experiencia educativa de las Ligas Agrarias Cristianas del Paraguay [The educational experience of the Christian Agrarian Leagues of Paraguay]. XI Jornadas Interescuelas/Departamentos de Historia, 1–15.
- Nikolajczuk, M. (2016). Genocidio reorganizador en Paraguay [Reorganizing genocide in Paraguay]. *Revista de la Red Intercatedras de Historia de América Latina Contemporánea*, 5, 133–146.
- Pérez, C., Lezciano, P., Cuenca, N. S. C., Rodas, C. D. G., Vera, N., Meza, E., & Pusineri, A. (2015). *Pensamiento Crítico en el Paraguay. Memoria del ciclo de conversatorios 2015 [Critical Thought in Paraguay. Memory of the 2015 discussion cycle]*. Base Investigaciones Sociales.
- Portillo, A., & Elías, R. (2016). La formación de docentes rurales y el desarrollo agrario de la dictadura stronista [The training of rural teachers and the agrarian development of the Stronist dictatorship]. *Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana*, 18(26), 204–217. <https://doi.org/10.19053/01227238.4372>
- Portillo, A., & Paradeta, M. (2017). Educación campesina o educación para los campesinos [Peasant education or education for peasants]. *Novapolis*, 11, 57–82.
- Quijano, A. (1992). Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad [Coloniality and modernity/rationality]. *Perú Indígena*, 13(29), 11–20.

- Riquelme, Q. (2019). Rearticulación del movimiento campesino en Paraguay durante el período 1980-2016 [Re-articulation of the peasant movement in Paraguay during the 1980–2016 period]. *Kera Yvoty: Reflexiones sobre la cuestión social*, 4, 28–40. <https://doi.org/10.54549/ky.4.2019.28>
- Rodas, C. D. (2015). Ubaldo Chamorro y la educación rural. La vigencia de un pensamiento pedagógico [Ubaldo Chamorro and rural education. The contemporary relevance of a pedagogical thought]. Tape-a.
- Rodríguez, G. A. (1990). Testimonio de la represión política en Paraguay, 1975-1989 [Testimony of political repression in Paraguay, 1975–1989]. Comité de Iglesias.
- Soto, L. (2019). Mujeres, dictadura, resistencia y represión en Paraguay [Women, dictatorship, resistance, and repression in Paraguay]. *Cuarto Propio*.
- Teun, A. V. D. (1994). Análisis crítico del discurso [Critical Discourse Analysis]. *Archive.org*.
- Valdez, S. C. A. (2019). Escuelitas Campesinas de las Ligas Agrarias Cristinas. Conciencia social y autoeducación [Peasant Schools of the Christian Agrarian Leagues. Social awareness and self-education]. *Revista Internacional de Investigación en Ciencias Sociales*, 15(2). <https://doi.org/10.18004/riics.2019.diciembre.219-242>