

The educational reform of Marcelino Domingo. Implementation of New School ideas in Republican Spain

La reforma educativa de Marcelino Domingo. La implementación de los postulados de la Escuela Nueva en la España republicana

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Manuela Ortega-Ruiz

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9187-0578>

Universidad de Jaén

Abstract

The aim of this research is to reveal the relationship between the educational ideas of Marcelino Domingo, Minister of Public Instruction during the first government of the Second Republic, and the principles of the New School, understanding that his educational reform intended to develop an educational system based on the postulates of this pedagogical movement. To carry out this research, we have chosen an interdisciplinary approach and a qualitative methodology, based on Documentary Content Analysis (DCA). From the analysis of the essays and speeches, we have been able to identify the main pedagogical ideas in the political thought of Marcelino Domingo, related to the New School. The regulation that shaped the new educational system, reflected principles such as coeducation, the active school and creativity. The conclusion of this article is that Domingo was the point of connection between the republican movement and the New School in Spain, since it went from being a minority pedagogical current restricted to private initiatives, to constituting the foundations of the public and official educational system in the Second Republic.

Keywords: New School, Spain, educational innovation, political thought, educational policy, republicanism.

Resumen

El objetivo principal de este artículo es revelar la relación existente entre las ideas educativas de Marcelino Domingo, primer ministro de Instrucción Pública durante la Segunda República, y los principios de la Escuela Nueva, entendiendo que la reforma emprendida por el nuevo ministro estaba destinada a desarrollar un sistema educativo basado en los postulados de esta corriente pedagógica. Para llevar a cabo esta investigación, se ha optado por una perspectiva interdisciplinar y una metodología cualitativa, basada en el Análisis de Documental de Contenido (ADC). A partir del análisis de sus ensayos y discursos, se han podido identificar las principales ideas pedagógicas en el pensamiento político de Marcelino Domingo, relacionadas con la Escuela Nueva. Principios tales como coeducación, la escuela activa y la creatividad fueron trasladados a los decretos que dieron forma al nuevo sistema educativo. La conclusión final de este artículo es que Domingo significó el punto de enlace entre el movimiento republicano y la Escuela Nueva en España, pues pasó de ser una corriente pedagógica minoritaria y restringida a iniciativas privadas, a constituir las bases del sistema educativo público y oficial en la Segunda República.

Palabras clave: Escuela Nueva, España, innovación educativa, pensamiento político, política educativa, republicanismo.

Introduction and State of the Art

Studying the education system during the Second Republic provides valuable insights into the significance Republicans placed on democratic values such as equality, freedom, and prosperity, as well as the advancement of knowledge and the government's commitment to its citizens. As Antonio Molero pointed out in 1977, the interest in understanding the reforms of the first Republican government stems from the fact that the early 1930s witnessed the most profound transformations in the field of education. Therefore, it is of analytical relevance to examine the ideas that Marcelino Domingo, the first Minister of Education, held on this matter.

The first works on education during the Republic were published as early as the 1970s, with notable books including Mariano Pérez Galán's (1975), *La enseñanza en la Segunda República Española*; Antonio Molero's (1977), *La reforma educativa en la II República. Primer Bienio*; Mercedes Samaniego's (1977), *La política educativa de la II República durante el bienio azañista*, and Claudio Lozano's (1980), *La educación*

republicana, 1931-1939. These early studies shed light on a period of recent Spanish history that had been silenced by the dictatorship, especially in identifying the key elements of Republican education policy. These landmark studies delved into concepts such as coeducation, active schooling, secularism, and the modernization of *Escuelas Normales*, and they continue to be regarded as important reference works to this day. Building upon these, numerous publications focused on specific aspects of education during the Second Republic, such as pedagogical missions (Otero, 1982; Canes, 1993; Otero, 2006); primary education (Molero, 1984; Vicente, 2018); the religious question and education in the Republic (Barrios, 1999; Moreno-Seco, 2003; Ostolaza, 2009); teacher training (Lantero, 1978; Molero, 2009; Alejo, 2015; Menguiano and Del Pozo, 2021); and even educational inspection during this period (Martí, 2003). In addition to these studies, it is worth mentioning Antonio Sánchez-Rodríguez's book (2003), which focuses on the constitutional foundations that allowed for educational reform, and Herminio Barreiro's article (2008) on the legacy of educational reform during this historical period. There were also numerous publications on the implementation of this social policy in specific regions and communities (Rodríguez, 1974; Navarro, 1979; Ortega, 1982; Benvenuty, 1987; Palmero, 1990; Berruezo, 1991; Domínguez, 1999; García Salmerón, 2003; Asensio, 2007). These local studies reveal the challenges faced by the Republicans in the implementation and execution of their education policy, thus providing significant value to our understanding of education during the Second Republic.

Various studies have explored the methodological shifts in teaching (Fernández, 1985; Molero, 1988; Del Pozo, 2004, 2007; Esteban, 2016), and pedagogical initiatives that emerged prior to the Second Republic and were highly influential during this period, such as the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (ILA), the *Junta para la Ampliación de Estudios* (JAE), or the *Instituto Escuela*. The publications that focus on these initiatives address topics related to the New School movement, as well as the influence that the ILA had on the pedagogical ideas of the Second Republic (Millán, 1983; Palacios, 1988; Viñao, 2000).

This interest in understanding the educational model of the Second Republic led to the analysis of both primary and secondary political figures who played a relevant role in the reforms. An initial comparative analysis of all the Ministers of Public Instruction was published in 1991, examining their social background, foreign studies, professional activity,

political career, and ministerial mobility from a sociological perspective (Cuenca and Miranda, 1991). However, most studies on these ministers have been published in the form of biographies. Fernando de los Ríos has received the most attention in this regard (Zapatero, 1974, 1999; Cámara, 2000a; Ruiz-Manjón, 2007). Moreover, his complete works were edited, and a special issue of the *Boletín de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza* dedicated to the socialist minister was published in 2000, analyzing the educational reform carried out by his ministry (Cámara, 2000b). Another Minister of Public Instruction who has been the subject of study is Filiberto Villalobos, who held the position during various periods of the second biennium (Rodríguez, 1985, 2005; Robledo, 2005). Salvador de Madariaga, who served as the head of this ministry from March to April 1934, has also been the subject of numerous publications (Molina, 1987; Preston, 1987; Derungs, 2009; Grandío, 2017), although these did not focus on his role as Minister of Public Instruction. The ministerial work of the remaining heads of Public Instruction, excluding Domingo, has been addressed in more general works (Alba, 1975; Álvarez, 2000; Pérez Galán, 2000).

In the case of Marcelino Domingo, several works have been published that explore different political and personal aspects of his life, such as his involvement in Catalanism (Poblet, 1978) or his political career (Carod Rovira, 1990; Subirats, 1995; Pujadas, 1996). Although these works mention his position as Minister of Public Instruction, they do not delve into his specific initiatives. While ample attention has been given to numerous publications explaining the changes seen in the field during the first biennium of the Second Republic, there is no study to date on Domingo's role in the educational reforms or the influence of new pedagogical trends on his political proposals.

Based on these premises, the main objective of this article is to analyze the relationship between Marcelino Domingo's educational proposals and the contributions of the New School movement in the Republican education system. A coherent secondary objective is to identify the educational reforms implemented in Spain during the first period of the Second Republic under Domingo's leadership. An interdisciplinary approach was adopted to carry out this study on educational reforms in the early months of the Republic, on the basis of its capacity to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the educational reforms. This involves a convergence of pedagogy, political history and public policies, and

political thought. In essence, this study aims to fill a gap identified in the research on educational reform during the Republic by focusing on the role of Marcelino Domingo and his influence on the course of education in the Republican regime.

Theoretical Background

Educational reform during the first two years of the Republic embraced the majority of principles developed by the New School pedagogical movement. This movement emerged in the latter half of the 19th century, primarily in the United States and Europe, as an alternative to the traditional school model that had prevailed until then. Its development was closely linked to the expansion of democratic ideas and the establishment of compulsory education for all boys, and occasionally also girls, guaranteed by the State. Access to education for children from all social classes led to the emergence of educational proposals that advocated for the implementation of differentiated pedagogical methods, with the aim of achieving a similar level of knowledge for all. The New School was one of the major proponents of these differentiated methods (Rude, 1937; Ferreire, 1972; García, 1991; Fernández-Soria & Pérez, 2014), utilizing various approaches such as Montessori or Decroly, which were spreading rapidly across the Old Continent (Negrín & Vergara, 2005; Del Pozo, 2007; Lara, 2014).

The expansion of this pedagogical movement in the early 20th century heightened concerns about maintaining common and coherent principles across the various new schools emerging worldwide. To address this, a meeting was held in Calais in 1921 to define and solidify these innovative ideas, which were ultimately documented in thirty postulates grouped according to their impact on school organization, intellectual development, or the moral and aesthetic education of children. Following this congress, and based on the theory and praxis generated by the New School movement, its principles can be grouped into five main categories: the vitalistic school (Luzuriaga, 1980; Palacios, 1988), the active school (Dewey, 1900; Luzuriaga, 1980; Vicente, 2002), the child-centred (or paedocentric) school (Murga, 2001; Carreño, 2008), the revaluation of the teacher's role (Schmid, 1976; Carreño, 2008), and the school as a community (Luzuriaga, 1980; Murga, 2001).

In Spain, the postulates of this movement began to spread in the late 19th century, coinciding with the *fin de siècle* crisis. Spanish regenerationists focused on education as a mechanism for transforming society and called for the establishment of a “new education” that would lead to a “new Spain” (Del Pozo, 2003, p. 320). However, the political regime was not favourable to educational reform until a significant faction within the Liberal Party embraced changes in this direction, influenced by the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, which had developed new teaching methodologies that echoed the principles of the New School since its establishment in 1876 (Luzuriaga, 1980, p. 233). The proximity between liberals and the ILE resulted in the promotion of educational reforms aimed at reducing the role of the Catholic Church in Spanish education, although these changes were not sustained over time. The alliance proved more effective in the creation of institutions and programs that helped to disseminate and implement the new pedagogical ideas, thus increasing the popularity of the New School. In this regard, in addition to the impetus provided by the establishment of the *Residencia de Señoritas* in Madrid (1915) and the *Instituto-Escuela* (1918) (Vázquez, 2001; Puelles, 2009), awareness of the New School movement spread significantly with the creation of the *Junta para la Ampliación de Estudios*, whose main mission was to fund educational stays abroad for the best students (Hernández, 2009; Marichal, 1988; Marín, 1990).

The connection between the JAE and the ILE was evident from the beginning. Proof of this is that the first deputy director of the JAE was José Castillejo, one of the most distinguished students of the ILE. Equally revealing is the fact that many of the scholarship holders came from this institution, such as Manuel Bartolomé Cossío and Lorenzo Luzuriaga, two of the most important pedagogues in Spain during the first third of the 20th century. They were clearly influenced by the New School and their contributions greatly enriched the educational reform program of the Second Republic (Del Pozo, 2003, 2004). Luzuriaga played a prominent role in promoting the New School in Spain through the *Revista de Pedagogía*, which was published from 1922 to 1936. In this journal, he expressed the innovative ideas stemming from this pedagogical movement. Bartolomé Cossío described him as “one of the most illustrious precursors of the two basic ideas of education in our time: internally, the Active School, and externally, the Unified School” (Luzuriaga,

1948, p. 132). Beyond these major initiatives, the New School movement spread across Spain through private initiatives, many of which were led by teachers in Catalonia (Del Pozo, 2003, p. 322), including Marcelino Domingo himself.

Materials and methods

The research methodology used in this study was qualitative in nature and relied on Content Document Analysis (CDA), defined here as “the cognitive process of recognizing, describing, and representing the document content” (Pinto, 1996, p. 301). The CDA process comprises three phases (Alía, 2008): document reading, influenced by the contexts in which the document is created and read (Flick, 2012; Gibbs, 2012); analysis, consisting of dividing the text into several units (segmentation), identifying relevant units and eliminating the rest (selection), and interpretation; and finally, synthesis, where the gathered information is synthesized by drawing conclusions based on the analysis phase. The analysis categories for the second phase of the CDA process focused on Marcelino Domingo’s political ideology, as expressed in his essays and public speeches, and the public education policies implemented during his tenure as Minister of Public Instruction. These categories were treated as the independent and dependent variables, respectively.

The information for analysis was primarily sourced from institutional documents, particularly session records and legislation, as well as journalistic sources, which provide valuable insights into different social realities (Callejo, 2009). The main body of institutional data was obtained from Republican legislation through the digitized collection of the *Gazeta: colección histórica*, and from session records of the Constituent Courts found in the historical series of the *Congreso de los Diputados* session records. The hemerographic research was conducted using the *Hemeroteca Digital* of the National Library of Spain, which contains a collection of historical Spanish newspapers. Searches in these databases were limited to the timeframe relevant to this study: from 14 April to 17 December 1931, the months during which Marcelino Domingo served as Minister of Public Instruction.

To complement the CDA, numerous writings by Domingo were consulted, extracting ideas related to the issue of education. Likewise,

speeches that he delivered in the Constituent Courts or had published in the written press were also reviewed, along with the political program of the Radical Socialist Republican Party. To achieve a deeper understanding of the impact of his discourse on society, discourse analysis techniques were employed. This involved studying the construction, functioning, and evolution of his speeches, as well as examining the social, political, and institutional references within them (Lozano, Peña-Marín & Abril, 1993; Howarth, 1997). In the review of his political thought, the analysis was extended to cover the period from the early 20th century to 1936. This broader timeframe allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the main elements of his political vision and, in particular, his educational project for the Second Republic.

Analysis and results

On 14 April 1931, a period filled with democratic hopes began, led by a group of Republicans and Socialists, among them Marcelino Domingo. Given his professional and political background, Domingo seemed to be the best choice for the position of Minister of Public Instruction in the provisional government. In the early 20th century, Domingo was one of those teachers who embraced the principles of the New School and implemented various initiatives in line with this educational approach. At just twenty years old, he secured a teaching position in the municipal schools of Tortosa (Tarragona), while participating in the Catalan Republican movement. As a teacher, he witnessed first-hand the challenging circumstances faced by the most underprivileged families, prompting him to launch a campaign denouncing their social conditions and strongly criticizing the prominent role of the Catholic Church in education. The pressures he faced took a toll on him, and after two years of teaching in the municipal schools, he decided to establish a private school in Roquetes, then a hamlet of Tortosa, in 1905. Capitalizing on the circulation of new pedagogical ideas in Catalonia, the young teacher defined his school as secular, respecting the individual conscience of the students, and implemented coeducation in the classroom as a means to promote equal education. Despite the challenges, the school soon had around 200 students from diverse backgrounds, as families with limited resources could attend at no cost (Garcitoral, 1930, p. 70). This experience provided a

unique opportunity to put new pedagogical methodologies into practice and assess their effectiveness in a specific context¹.

While pursuing his career as a teacher, Domingo took his first steps in republicanism, specifically in progressive Catalan republicanism. Guided by Rovira i Virgili, he embraced the republican and federalist ideas of Pi i Margall (Moreno Luzón, 2006; Robledo, 2006). Initially serving as a councillor in Tortosa for *Solidaridad Catalana* (1909), and later as a deputy (from 1914 to 1923, with the exception of the 1920 elections), he gained the sympathy of other Catalan and Spanish republicans, with whom he collaborated extensively during the Restoration period. During this time, he developed closer ties with the socialists, which in turn brought him closer to the world of the proletariat. Likely as a result of this transition, in his view the worker acquired the status of the “greatest and best social collaborator in the work of regeneration that, out of necessity, must be done”². Regardless of the challenges inherent in political practice, his thought always remained rooted in the fundamental principles of freedom, democracy, justice, goodness, and homeland. It is true that Domingo’s patriotic stance had to be reconciled with his Catalan identity and Catalanism, leading him to propose a solution to the national problem: the establishment of a republic that guaranteed freedom through a pact for the articulation of the nation (Domingo, 1930). The republican’s position regarding the articulation of cultural identity found a connection with his educational program in advocating for the use of vernacular languages in the classroom.

Following Primo de Rivera’s *coup d’état*, Domingo positioned himself clearly in the opposition and in 1929, he founded the Radical Socialist Republican Party (PRRS) (Avilés, 2006). This new party viewed education “as one of the primary duties and rights of the republican and secular state, inspired by its principles and oriented towards the social goals of the community, excluding any confessional tendencies, and generously funded in the Budget”. Education was thus seen as a means to foster community and strengthen the bonds of unity among Spaniards (Cucalón, 2016). In the *Ideario* of the PRRS (1930), public instruction was highlighted as an essential element in the future Republic. Education should be “comprehensive, secular, and free” at all levels, strictly prohibiting the involvement of any

¹Some of the techniques and methods of the New School implemented by Domingo in this school in Roquetas are referenced in the newspaper article “Y vengan hojas sueltas” (“And Loose Sheets Keep Coming”), *Las Dominicales. Semanario Librepensador*, 01/03/1907, p. 4. Among them, coeducation, secularism, and classroom cleanliness were highlighted.

²Session records of the *Congreso de los Diputados*, Legislature 1918-1919, 25/04/1918, n. 27, p. 646.

religious community in shaping education policies. The creation of public education centres where there was demand should be promoted. Viewing the school as a resource whose purpose transcended mere academic development, the State had to guarantee the support and nourishment of children. Moreover, the party emphasized the importance of secondary and post-school education, drawing inspiration from the experience of the *Instituto-Escuela* in this field. They also focused on providing technical education for professions, tailored to the specific needs of each region. For the teaching profession, they called for the “urgent training of new and numerous cohorts of teachers with equal remuneration and identical proportionality in their staff compared to other civil servants”³. This last proposal aligned with the principle of revaluing the role of the teacher, which had been championed by the New School movement.

The concept of education as an instrument for democratic transformation was reflected in the Republican Constitution of December 1931, specifically in Article 48, which was meant to be developed through specific legislation. However, during Domingo’s tenure as Minister of Public Instruction, the reforms undertaken were implemented through decrees, while awaiting the approval of a general education law that never materialized. When Domingo took office, the enrolment rate was over sixty percent for boys and fifty-six percent for girls, although less than half of this student body, around forty-three percent, was enrolled in public schools (Núñez, 2005). Despite the brief duration of his term in this department, Domingo’s legacy extended beyond legislative measures, as his team continued to hold positions in subsequent governments, even as political parties changed in the executive branch. Prominent figures among these positions were Rodolfo Llopis as Director General of Primary Education and Domingo Barnés as Undersecretary.

Among his collaborators, Domingo also had Lorenzo Luzuriaga, who was one of the main proponents of the new pedagogy in Spain. Domingo appointed him as a member of the Council of Public Instruction, with the intention of having him draft the long-awaited education law based on his “unified school” concept. The establishment of this organization aimed to bring about a “creative renewal that national education requires to quickly incorporate the progress of our time”⁴, and placing

³ “Manifiesto of the Radical Socialist Republican Party”, December 1929, and “Ideology of the Radical Socialist Republican Party”, September 1930, both included in the work by Artola (1991).

⁴ “Decree regarding the composition of the Council of Public Education and the organization of work within it” (Gaceta de Madrid, n. 125, 05/05/1931, p. 538).

this distinguished educator at its forefront represented a tangible (and achievable) commitment to the principles of the New School. Although a new education law could not be approved, Luzuriaga's contributions formed the basis for the educational provisions in the Republican Constitution and, consequently, for the legislative developments in the field of education in the subsequent years (Puelles, 2011).

During his tenure, Marcelino Domingo championed several measures inspired by the New School, with a particular focus on coeducation and secularization. One of his key proposals was the adoption of the unified school model, which epitomized the principles of this pedagogical trend. Regarding coeducation in the classrooms, Marcelino Domingo advocated for its implementation in the education system, aligning with the idea of schools as institutions for shaping citizens. The government could not deny education to half of the population, as the Republic would be incomplete (Domingo, 1934). This concept of education was consistent with the principles of the vitalistic school, which aimed to bring the reality of the outside world into the classroom. Given that boys and girls coexisted in society, it was only natural that this coexistence should also be reflected in the classroom. The responsibility of shaping this idea fell to Luzuriaga, who included coeducation in his educational project, ensuring the presence of girls at all levels of education. However, due to strong opposition from certain sectors, coeducation could not be implemented in many schools. This was the case despite the construction of new schools favouring greater access for girls to primary education (Samaniego, 1977; Molero, 1991). Domingo tried to overcome this resistance by promoting various measures, including the approval of a decree urging several secondary schools to admit students of both sexes. At the beginning of the decree, the intended structural scope of this innovation was explicitly and literally acknowledged, stating that if coeducation was to be applied in any official secondary education centre, "it does not seem reasonable to maintain exceptions [...] by creating local female institutes [...]. To the consideration of this principle, we should add the urgent need to open said institutes to numerous students, without distinction of sex"⁵.

⁵ "Decree stating that the female institutes of Madrid and Barcelona should follow the same regulations as other educational institutions of their level and accept enrolment from students of either sex who request it, and that the current names of the institutes 'Infante Beatriz' and 'Infanta María Cristina' should be replaced with 'Instituto Cervantes' and 'Instituto Maragall'" (Gaceta de Madrid, n. 241, 29/08/1931, pp. 1495-1496).

Alongside coeducation, secularization faced strong criticism from the more conservative segments of Spanish society. The proposals for secularization also received criticism from more radical Republicans, who considered them too moderate (Puelles, 2009). However, the principle of achieving a neutral school was guaranteed from the beginning of Marcelino Domingo's ministerial activity. In May, he approved a decree eliminating the obligation of religious education⁶. However, far from being completely eradicated, a circular published a few days later ensured that parents could request religious education for their children in writing and that religious symbols could remain in the classrooms. In a text published in 1932 titled "Gospel of the Republic", the adoption of this conciliatory approach was justified based on the concept of a secular school that could not be seen as being "in opposition to religious beliefs. [...] This principle denotes the utmost respect for your conscience as children and the conscience of the teacher" (Terrero, 1932, p. 39). According to Domingo, the purpose was not to foster anti-clericalism but to ensure freedom of conscience. This freedom was considered fundamental to fulfilling the principles of an active school, which required respecting the child's conscience in order for them to develop as individuals.

Undoubtedly, the implementation of the Unified School project was Domingo's closest expression to the ideas of the New School. This model of education, which aimed to eliminate inequalities manifested from birth, embraced the principles of a vitalistic and active school centred around the child (a paedocentric school), where the role of the teacher was essential, and the school was conceived as an instrument for building communities. In Domingo's own words (1932), the purpose of the Republic was for schools to be:

Not a place of torment, but a home; not a fetid building [...] but a joyful space [...], with beautiful canvases that were gifts and teachings for the eyes; not a prison [...] but a community identified by the unity of work; not a lost island in the town, but a centre of culture that [...] fully fulfilled its social function (p. 12).

Consequently, in line with these principles, Marcelino Domingo advocated for the use of mother tongues in education. For the minister,

⁶ "Decree stating that religious instruction will not be mandatory in primary schools or any other institutions under this Ministry" (Gaceta de Madrid, n. 129, 09/05/1931, pp. 619-620).

respecting the vernacular language meant “respecting the soul of the child. Because in Catalonia, there is a language under these conditions, and not because I am Catalan, but because I am a teacher, I have issued my decree on their use in school”⁷. To achieve this, teachers needed to be proficient in Catalan, and its study was included in the *Escuelas Normales*⁸.

In addition to incorporating religious and ideological neutrality, coeducation, and universality into the classroom, the model of a single or unified school aimed to establish an education system that encompassed all levels of education. Once again, it faced opposition from the right, who strongly criticized Domingo’s focus on the early stages of education while neglecting higher education⁹.

Naturally, educational reform entailed the universality of education. For Domingo, education was a crucial aspect of the democratic system that demanded a comprehensive approach through state intervention. This axiom, prominently manifested through the universalization of education, not only led to an increase in the number of schools but also involved the implementation of various measures concerning teacher training, in line with the principle of revaluing the role of the teacher. Decrees were approved against professional intrusion¹⁰, training courses were established for the selection of teaching staff¹¹, and the *Escuelas Normales* were reformed. From September 1931, these teacher training centres began operating as mixed-gender institutions, emulating coeducation in primary education. The number of teachers was also increased to fill the positions created by the planned construction of new schools, especially in rural areas, and a salary raise for these professionals was

⁷ “The Ministers of War, State, Justice and Education, the Director of Prisons, and the General Captain of Madrid give extensive speeches” (*La Voz*, 15/06/1931, p. 4). The decree referred to in these speeches was the “Decree repealing all provisions against the use of Catalan in primary schools; stating that nursery schools and kindergartens should exclusively teach in the mother tongue, either Spanish or Catalan, and likewise in primary schools, where Catalan students should be taught the knowledge and practice of the Spanish language from the age of eight” (*Gaceta de Madrid*, n. 120, 30/04/1931, pp. 413-414).

⁸ “Decree stating that in each of the Normal Schools for Teachers in Catalonia, a Chair should be established for the knowledge and study of the Catalan language” (*Gaceta de Madrid*, n. 161, 10/06/1931, p. 1285).

⁹ Session records of the *Congreso de los Diputados*, Legislature 1931-1933, Constituent Cortes, 12/08/1931, n. 16.

¹⁰ “Decree declaring that no one can exercise the profession of a teacher in a primary school, regardless of the level, without possessing the title of Teacher” (*Gaceta de Madrid*, n. 143, 23/05/1931, p. 882).

¹¹ “Decree stating that admission to the national primary teaching profession will be carried out through a professional selection course, organized as mentioned” (*Gaceta de Madrid*, n. 185, 04/07/1931, pp. 109-112).

approved¹². All these initiatives aimed to bring greater dignity to the teaching profession, with the intention of attracting talent to the field (Domingo, 1932).

The construction of new schools was always a central aspect of Minister Domingo's educational project. In late June 1931, the government approved a massive plan for building education centres through a decree, which also entailed the creation of 7,000 teaching positions. Domingo's program focused in particular on establishing these centres in rural areas¹³, where illiteracy rates were highest. Furthermore, these rural regions especially needed the impetus of modernity that Domingo sought to achieve during his tenure in the Ministry of Public Instruction, driven by the conviction that building new schools and improving existing ones was key to fulfilling the principles of a vitalistic, active, and community-building school (Domingo, 1932). As stated in the decree of 24th June, the goal of achieving universal education required the establishment of 27,151 new schools, almost doubling the number of existing centres. It was not only about creating new centres but also equipping them with the necessary educational resources. Hence, each centre was intended to have its own library¹⁴. Moreover, the provision of a canteen was encouraged to ensure that students were well nourished, which was essential for them to be able to focus on their studies rather than having to seek sustenance elsewhere¹⁵.

The universalization of education was complemented by the *misiones pedagógicas* (pedagogical missions) project, an innovative program aimed at bringing culture to all regions of Spain and all social classes. These missions were carried out by the *Patronato de Misiones Pedagógicas*, an institution under the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts, chaired by Manuel Bartolomé Cossío. Cossío traced the origins of these missions back to Giner de los Ríos' idea of sending the best professionals to the poorest territories. Marcelino Domingo expressed his support for

¹² "Decree stating that, effective from 1st July of the current year, national teachers with annual salaries of 2,500 and 2,000 *pesetas* will be increased to 3,000 *pesetas*" (Gaceta de Madrid, n. 220, 08/08/1931, pp. 1064-1065).

¹³ "Decrees approving the projects drafted by the Technical Office for School Construction to build buildings for schools in the stated locations" (Gaceta de Madrid, n. 189, 08/07/1931, pp. 212-214).

¹⁴ "Decree stating that every primary school should have a library, and declaring that where multiple schools exist, they can associate to establish one or more libraries" (Gaceta de Madrid, n. 220, 08/08/1931, p. 1064).

¹⁵ "Decree stating that local committees for primary education should establish school canteens in as many schools as possible, ensuring that a large number of students benefit from them" (Gaceta de Madrid, n. 241, 29/08/1931, pp. 1496-1497).

this initiative in the preamble of the decree issued on 30th May, emphasizing the need to implement new methods to educate the “people, by reaching out to them and to primary school teachers, not only through printed texts, but also through the spoken word and the spirit that moves it, and inspires a communion of ideas and noble aspirations”¹⁶. Based on these principles, the pedagogical missions became a celebrated instrument of popular education. They also involved young artists who were committed to the cultural and educational vision of the Republic.

Conclusions

The evidence presented throughout this study supports the hypothesis that Marcelino Domingo served as the link between the Republican movement and the New School. Domingo played a crucial role in transforming the principles of this pedagogical movement, initially confined to private initiatives such as the ILE and small schools in Catalonia and Madrid, into the very basis of the public and official education system during the Second Republic.

Marcelino Domingo’s work in the Ministry of Public Instruction aimed to transform the Spanish education system, which was considered a fundamental pillar of the Republic. Within this context, the principles of a vitalistic school became a reality through initiatives such as universalization, which brought children from different social classes together and promoted cohesion. This was reinforced by the introduction of coeducation from an early age, fostering mutual learning between genders. The paedocentric or child-centred vision of education was also implemented in schools, ensuring the use of vernacular languages at all educational levels and promoting nondoctrinaire thinking within a neutral education framework, thus creating a respectful environment for children’s development and fulfilling the principles of an active school. The atmosphere of freedom in the classroom, which relied heavily on the role of the teacher, was also fostered through the professional and economic consolidation of educators. Increasing salaries, promoting specialized

¹⁶ “Decree creating a ‘Board of Pedagogical Missions’ under this Ministry, tasked with spreading general culture, modern educational orientation, and civic education in villages and towns, with special attention to the spiritual interests of rural populations” (*Gaceta de Madrid*, n. 150, 30/05/1931, pp. 1033-1034).

training, and recognizing their importance in Spanish society all aimed to prevent the precarity experienced in the past from interfering with their educational work and, by extension, the implementation of ambitious reforms advocated by Domingo. Teacher training, primarily conducted in the *Escuelas Normales*, became a fertile ground for the principles of an active school. It also inspired the pedagogical missions, whose activities made culture accessible and enjoyable to segments of the population traditionally excluded from formal education.

In short, from the beginning of his political career, Domingo embraced the idea that education was the most effective instrument for achieving the necessary social cohesion to build a community of all citizens and involve everyone in the project of Spain. However, achieving this goal required schools to not only educate students in scientific subjects but also act as platforms for the dissemination of Republican values. The reforms undertaken by Domingo aimed to institutionalize the principles of the New School, with the significant contribution of pedagogues trained in this paradigm. Although a significant part of his work was not fully accomplished, Domingo left the ministry with a positive assessment of his reformist efforts, stating, “Leaving the Ministry meant letting go of a fruitful, feasible, and effective job in which one could see reality transformed every day” (Domingo, 1934, p. 176).

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Contact address: Manuela Ortega-Ruiz. Universidad de Jaén, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y Jurídicas. Campus Las Lagunillas s/n, 23071, Jaén, España. E-mail: moruiz@ujaen.es