

Social Resistance to Militaristic Educational Reform in the Peruvian Amazon (1968 - 1980)

Resistencia social a la reforma educativa militarista en la Amazonía peruana (1968-1980)

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Abstract: This article examines social resistance to Peru's Militaristic Educational Reform (1968-1980) in the Amazon, showing how a centrally designed project of national integration was reinterpreted, contested and, in practice, weakened at the local level. Drawing on legislation, ministerial and regional administrative records, press materials and educators' and community actors' accounts, the study offers a historical-qualitative analysis of the reform's reception in schools. Two main rationalities of resistance emerge. Teachers challenged the militarisation of pedagogical work and the erosion of professional autonomy, linking everyday school routines to wider disputes over legitimacy and governance. Families, by contrast, evaluated the reform through a pragmatic lens, prioritising schooling that promised social mobility and viewing imposed cultural-linguistic measures as misaligned with their aspirations. Together, these dynamics help explain why the reform generated weak local legitimacy and limited educational traction. The article argues that historically informed policy design is indispensable for reforms in culturally diverse and structurally disadvantaged territories, where the meaning of schooling is negotiated in relation to state power, identity and future-making.

Keywords: Militaristic Educational Reform, Peruvian Amazon, History of Education, Teacher Resistance,

Education Policy.

Resumen: Este artículo examina la resistencia social a la Reforma Educativa Militarista del Perú (1968-1980) en la Amazonía, mostrando cómo un proyecto diseñado centralmente de integración nacional fue reinterpretado, cuestionado y, en la práctica, debilitado a nivel local. Basándose en la legislación, registros administrativos ministeriales y regionales, materiales de prensa y relatos de educadores y actores comunitarios, el estudio ofrece un análisis histórico-cualitativo de la recepción de la reforma en las escuelas. Surgen dos racionalidades principales de la resistencia. Los docentes desafiaron la militarización del trabajo pedagógico y la erosión de la autonomía profesional, vinculando las rutinas escolares cotidianas a disputas más amplias sobre la legitimidad y la gobernanza. Las familias, por el contrario, evaluaron la reforma a través de una lente pragmática, priorizando la escolarización que prometía movilidad social y viendo las medidas culturales-lingüísticas impuestas como desalineadas con sus aspiraciones. En conjunto, estas dinámicas ayudan a explicar por qué la reforma generó una legitimidad local débil y una tracción educativa limitada. El artículo argumenta que el diseño de políticas con base histórica es indispensable para las reformas en territorios culturalmente diversos y estructuralmente desfavorecidos, donde el significado de la escolarización se negocia en relación con el poder estatal, la identidad y la construcción del futuro.

Palabras clave: Reforma Educativa Militarista, Amazonía Peruana, historia de la educación, resistencia docente, política educativa.

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1. Introduction

Educational reforms are not merely technical adjustments to schooling. They are political, institutional and cultural projects through which states attempt to redefine the purposes of education, the organisation of teaching and the relationship between schools and society. Their effects depend not only on formal policy design, but also on the ways schools, teachers and local communities interpret, adapt or resist centrally defined changes (Bojesen, 2023; Dimmock et al., 2021). This makes reform especially fragile in territories marked by weak institutional capacity, cultural diversity and historically unequal relations with the state.

In Peru, the reform promoted by the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces (Gobierno Revolucionario de las Fuerzas Armadas, GRFA, 1968–1975) represented a transformative attempt to restructure the education system on the basis of a nationalist political approach. The reform also sought to provide an ideological and cultural basis for the broader structural transformations promoted by the military regime, making education a central instrument for shaping the political and social project of the period (Rojas, 2019).

However, its implementation in multicultural regions such as San Martín in the Peruvian Amazon, shaped by Andean migration and Amazonian Indigenous peoples, faced complex forms of local resistance and adaptation. While the empirical focus of this study is strictly limited to the period 1968–1980, the findings offer historically grounded insights that remain relevant for understanding the recurrent difficulties of educational reform in Peru in subsequent decades. The decline of the reformist project was marked by social resistance, which shaped its outcome in the Amazonian region. What occurred under *velasquismo* showed that the implementation of education policies in contexts of cultural diversity constitutes a permanent challenge for nation states (Tubino, 2012). Although the educational reform constituted a paradigmatic case of transformative ambition, it encountered multifaceted resistances (Oliart, 2011). It is observed that transformations in the educational sphere demand a considerable effort from the entire school community and, especially, the active participation of teachers for the educational

proposal to be developed (Lomba-Portela et al., 2022); in Peru, specifically in the case study, that effort met strong resistance.

The Peruvian Amazon offers a historically significant setting for studying the limitations of state-led social engineering projects (Scott, 1998). Regional studies make it possible to analyse how homogenising educational models collide with local “logics of action” (teachers and parents) grounded in cultural imaginaries, aspirations for social mobility and survival strategies, which ultimately frustrate, subvert or re-signify educational reforms.

Although the Velasquista Educational Reform has been briefly examined at the national level (Oliart, 2011; Rojas, 2019), there is a notable scarcity of research addressing its regional implementation, particularly in Amazonian contexts. This study seeks to fill that geographical and cultural gap by offering a perspective from the Peruvian Amazon, which is crucial for understanding the complexity of the Velasquista project and for conceiving it as a case that provides essential insights for educational reforms that fully embrace Peru as a whole.

The problems of a decontextualised education, the tension between “academic”, “productive” and “inclusive” education, and the challenges of implementing Intercultural Bilingual Education (EIB) all find a direct echo in this historical episode. Analysing it provides an indispensable historical perspective to avoid repeating past mistakes and to design educational policies that are receptive to cultural diversity and the regional realities of Peru.

Guided by this logic, the purpose of this study is to systematically characterise the forms of social resistance that determined the outcome of the Velasquista educational reform in San Martín between 1968 and 1980. We specifically examine the articulation between teachers’ opposition, parental resistance and the institutional limitations of the State in contexts of linguistic diversity, using methodologies that generate sufficient data to draw conclusions that may be taken into account in the design and implementation of policies for educational transformation.

1.1. Historical Background and Scholarship

Ansión (1989), Rojas (2019) and Trapnell and Neira (2004) resistance to the Velasquista reform was basically centred on: (a) the opposition of the Peruvian teaching profession organised through the Sindicato Único de Trabajadores de la Educación del Perú (SUTEP), (b) parental rejection based on imaginaries of social mobility (Ansión, 1989), and, in addition, tensions around language policy and intercultural bilingual education (Lovón-Cueva & Quispe-Lacma, 2020; Trapnell & Neira, 2004). However, existing scholarship has paid limited attention to the intersection of these forms of resistance in internal frontier spaces such as San Martín, where Andean migrants and Indigenous populations with differentiated educational projects converged.

Previous analyses of intercultural bilingual education in Peru have shown that the reformist agenda had to respond simultaneously to schooling expansion, Indigenous education and the tension between cultural recognition and national integration (López, 2005; Trapnell & Neira, 2004).

The reform reached San Martín during a period of rapid demographic change. The Marginal de la Selva highway and state-led colonisation programmes attracted thousands of Andean migrants who associated schooling with citizenship, social mobility and access to urban forms of opportunity. This movement created an unprecedented demand for education. As Ames (2020) reports, school enrolment in the region increased by 187%

between 1972 and 1975, while institutional capacity remained insufficient.

For many migrant families, the forest initially appeared as a space of economic possibility. That expectation soon became fragile as rural life continued to be associated with hardship, precarious livelihoods and limited routes of advancement. In this context, schooling was valued less as preparation for agricultural production than as a pathway away from rural marginalisation. This tension helps explain why Basic Labour Education became one of the earliest sources of parental resistance to the reform.

Among the most urgent demands that the state had to address through the educational reform were:

High Illiteracy Rate: San Martín had one of the highest illiteracy rates in the country, with rates exceeding 60% in rural areas and among the Indigenous population. As the history of education shows, illiteracy tends to be understood only as the lack of reading and writing skills, rather than as the absence of a set of transformative forms of knowledge, such as ancestral knowledges themselves. Thus, the great majority of inhabitants, especially migrants, viewed education as the accumulation of “banking” knowledge that should enable them to leave the countryside, since rural life was associated with suffering. This aspiration came into direct conflict with the model of Basic Labour Education, which was a core component of the educational reform.

Cultural and Social Disintegration: the region was a receiving space for Andean migrants (colonists) and Amazonian Indigenous Peoples (such as the Awajún and Shawi), with an educational system that completely ignored their languages, cultures and knowledges, which generated a lack of mutual understanding among the population.

Demand for Integration: the recent, still incipient road connection and the promotion of colonisation generated an urgent demand for educational services that the traditional State was unable to meet. Education was seen as the main pathway to national integration and to the advancement of the agricultural frontier; however, during the reform process, society came to understand that its educational demands had not been met. School leaders faced a considerable challenge, as Giunco (2025) points out, in dealing with the difficulties of trying to harmonise institutional demands with the principles and dynamics of the local community.

In response to these conditions, the Velasco government promoted the Núcleos Educativos Comunes (NEC) between 1969 and 1972 as a territorial model of educational organisation. The NEC were intended to connect schooling with local development through basic labour education, community participation and teacher training in productive pedagogy. In Amazonian schools, this meant linking classroom activities with agriculture, carpentry, animal husbandry and other forms of work associated with the local economy (Comisión de Reforma de la Educación, 1970; Decreto-Ley N.º 19326, 1972; Trapnell & Neira, 2004).

The NEC initially expanded state presence in areas where schooling had been historically limited. Cuenca (2021) notes that this expansion was especially visible in recently colonised zones. Oliart (2011) similarly interprets the Velasco reform as a broad attempt to incorporate rural and Indigenous populations into a national project that presented education as both liberating and productive. In Amazonian contexts, bilingual education represented one of the reform’s most ambitious promises, although it was also among the most difficult to implement.

The limits of the NEC model became visible within a few years. As Oliart (2011) and Rojas (2019) notes, these units were increasingly perceived as “imaginary communities”,

since their operation often depended on a level of pedagogical commitment and administrative coordination that the state bureaucracy could not sustain. In practice, several NEC remained formal structures with limited institutional capacity, while others were reduced to isolated productive activities without a coherent pedagogical project.

The progressive weakening of the model was evident between 1975 and 1978. Official data indicate that, by 1978, only 35% of the NEC established in 1975 remained fully operational, while 45% functioned in a limited manner and 20% had closed completely (Dirección Regional de Educación San Martín, 1979). This decline was intensified by the social diversity of the region and by the state's limited capacity to respond to differentiated educational demands (López, 2005). In the same period, support for Indigenous-language education also weakened. Trapnell and Neira (2004) report that, between 1976 and 1980, the budget for materials in Indigenous languages was reduced by 60%, and specialised training for bilingual teachers was discontinued.

The implementation of the General Education Law No. 19326 consisted of: (a) structuring the education system into three levels, early childhood education, basic labour education (nine years) and higher education; (b) implementing bilingual education for Indigenous populations, with emphasis on Quechua and Awajún; (c) creating the Centros de Adiestramiento e Investigación Educativa (CADIEs) for teacher training and professional development; and (d) universalising the NEC as a model of territorial educational management in which teachers, parents and students planned development projects for the locality.

1.2. Social Resistance

Teachers' resistance. Drawing on Stacey et al. (2023), who examine how teachers experience processes of political change, the Peruvian case shows that a substantial part of the teaching profession opposed the reform from within a professional culture shaped by traditional schooling. Labour education was interpreted by many teachers as indoctrination and as a devaluation of literate academic culture. This perception was reinforced by the lack of effective in-service training and by the pressure exerted by the Sindicato Único de Trabajadores de la Educación del Perú (SUTEP), which framed militarism and teacher autonomy as politically antagonistic (López, 2005).

The predominantly urban and mestizo teaching profession also perceived the reform as a distortion of its professional role. In practice, teachers' resistance was expressed not only through open opposition, but also through selective appropriation, adaptation and contestation of reform mandates within existing school routines. This pattern is consistent with studies showing that teachers often resist reforms when they associate them with excessive regulation, administrative overload or a weakening of professional judgement (Berkovich, 2011; Bruns et al., 2019; Lomba-Portela et al., 2022). Gitlin and Margonis (1995) argue that reforms are more likely to reduce oppositional responses when they clarify planning conditions, time demands and the meaningful participation of educational actors.

Parents' Resistance: Among Andean migrant families, schooling was strongly associated with academic advancement, social mobility and the possibility of moving beyond rural hardship. Labour education was therefore interpreted with suspicion, since it appeared to tie children's futures to agricultural work and to reproduce the very inequalities that families expected schooling to overcome. In San Martín, many colonist families viewed education as a route toward progress beyond manual and agricultural

labour, rather than as preparation for remaining within it (Comisión de Reforma de la Educación, 1970; Decreto-Ley N.º 19326, 1972; Trapnell & Neira, 2004).

This expectation shaped concrete forms of pressure on schools. Mestizo and Indigenous families increasingly demanded a more traditional academic education, especially through greater emphasis on Spanish and mathematics. Records from the Local Educational Management Units show a 75% increase in parental requests for more hours in these subjects, alongside a 60% decrease in participation in school productive activities (Unidad de Gestión Educativa Local Moyobamba, 1978).

As educational institutions were weakened, rejection of instruction in local languages such as Quechua or Awajún increased; these began to be perceived as an obstacle to learning Spanish and to social integration, leading to opposition to their use in school. This situation not only reflected the consequences of a deficient policy but also revealed a process of dismemberment of cultural identity in which, ironically, communities came to regard their own culture as a factor of backwardness.

2. Methodology

This study is grounded in a qualitative historical case-study design aimed at reconstructing and interpreting the implementation of the Militaristic Educational Reform (1968–1980) in the San Martín region of the Peruvian Amazon. The case was selected due to its condition as an internal frontier territory marked by intense Andean migration, the presence of Amazonian Indigenous populations, and historically weak state capacity, all of which made it a critical setting for examining the interaction between centrally designed educational reforms and local social dynamics.

The empirical basis of the study draws on two complementary sources of evidence. First, documentary and archival materials produced by regional and local education authorities during the reform period were examined. These included administrative reports, institutional records and policy-related documents that made it possible to reconstruct implementation trajectories, institutional constraints and local responses to the reform. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with actors who had direct experience of the educational system during the period under study.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, guided by their capacity to provide historically situated accounts of the reform's implementation in San Martín. Eligibility was defined by three criteria: direct involvement in public schooling during the reform period, lived or institutional knowledge of schools affected by the reform, and the ability to speak from differentiated actor positions. The final sample comprised 80 participants: 70 teachers from different levels of basic education, five community leaders and five parents whose children attended public schools during the reform period. This composition was not intended to produce statistical representation, but to capture the range of perspectives most closely connected with the implementation and reception of the reform. Teachers provided insight into pedagogical work, institutional pressure and professional autonomy; parents offered accounts of family expectations and the perceived value of schooling; and community leaders helped situate school-level experiences within broader local dynamics.

Interviews were guided by open-ended prompts focused on participants' recollections of reform implementation, perceived changes in teachers' work, expectations regarding schooling, community responses and interpretations of the reform's objectives. Examples

of interview prompts are provided in Appendix A. Given the retrospective nature of these accounts, testimonies were treated as situated memories rather than as direct records of the past. They were systematically compared with documentary evidence in order to strengthen the historical plausibility of the reconstruction and to reduce the risk of relying on a single type of source.

All participants provided informed consent; confidentiality was ensured through anonymisation, and no identifying information is reported.

All qualitative material was processed using Atlas.ti. The analytical procedure followed an inductive logic and proceeded in three stages. First, open coding was used to identify recurrent meanings, practices and justifications associated with acceptance, contestation and adaptation of the reform. Second, codes were grouped into higher-order categories through constant comparison across actor groups and source types. Third, a triangulation stage was carried out to examine convergences and tensions between documentary evidence and retrospective testimonies, allowing the refinement of interpretations and reducing the risk of privileging any single source of evidence.

The Sankey diagram was developed only after the coding, categorisation and triangulation stages had been completed. It was constructed from the higher-order categories that emerged from the qualitative analysis, rather than from numerical counts of interview responses or documentary references. The nodes represent actor groups, forms of resistance and interpretive implications identified across the corpus, while the links represent interpretive associations established through comparison across sources and actor positions. These relationships were established through repeated comparison between documentary evidence, retrospective testimonies and the interpretive framework of the study. Accordingly, the diagram functions as a qualitative heuristic device that makes the structure of the analysis visible; it should not be interpreted as a measure of frequency, prevalence, magnitude, statistical association or causal effect.

At the interpretive stage, the findings were organised through an integrative narrative framework informed by meta-narrative thinking, particularly its concern with historically situated storylines, plural interpretive traditions and the relationship between evidence and explanatory narratives (Greenhalgh et al., 2005; Wong et al., 2013). In this article, a meta-narrative is understood as a broad explanatory storyline that connects dispersed empirical evidence with historically situated ways of interpreting educational reform. It is not used as a separate research design or as a systematic review methodology. Rather, it functions as an analytical lens for organising the meanings that emerged from documentary sources and retrospective interviews.

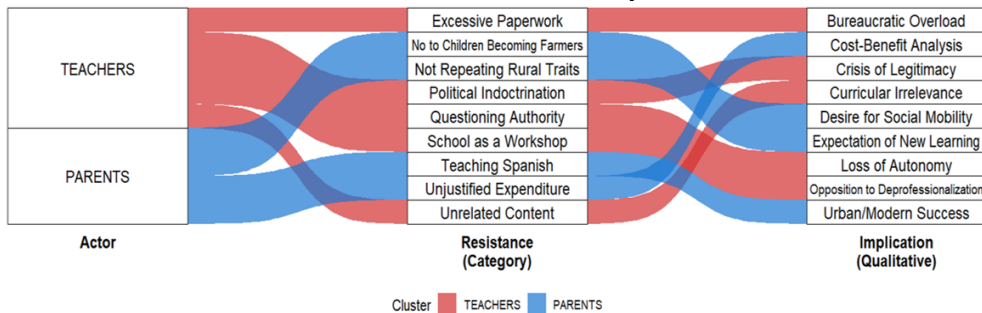
This distinction is important because the study does not reconstruct bodies of literature following the procedures of a meta-narrative review. Instead, it uses four interrelated interpretive perspectives, historical, socio-political, pedagogical and cultural, to connect locally grounded categories with wider debates on state reform, teacher resistance, parental expectations and cultural legitimacy. This procedure preserves a traceable analytical movement from sources to codes, from codes to categories and from categories to interpretive narratives.

3. Results

Figure 1 presents the qualitative structure of the findings by showing how actor groups, resistance categories and interpretive implications were connected during the

analysis. The diagram does not aggregate responses or quantify the documentary and interview material. Its purpose is to make visible the analytical pathway through which teachers' and parents' forms of resistance were differentiated and interpreted in relation to the historical, socio-political, pedagogical and cultural perspectives used in the study.

Figure 1: Categories of Teachers' and Parents' Resistance to the Educational Reform and their Qualitative Implications.



Note. The Sankey diagram is a qualitative visualisation derived from the coding, categorisation and triangulation process. The nodes correspond to higher-order categories identified through documentary sources and retrospective interviews, and the links show interpretive associations among actor groups, forms of resistance and analytical implications. The width, colour and visual arrangement of the flows do not indicate frequency, percentage, statistical weight, intensity or causality. The figure is used only to clarify the organisation of the findings and to make visible how different rationalities of resistance were connected within the interpretation.

3.1. Teachers' Rationality: Corporate Defence and Crisis of Legitimacy

The analysis reveals a structural bifurcation in the way the educational reform was received. Far from forming a single, uniform bloc of opposition, the data show a dissonance of perceptions between the main actors: while teachers articulate their resistance as a defence of professional identity and institutional autonomy, parents construct their opposition from a utilitarian logic oriented towards social mobility. Teachers' resistance is not expressed merely as a refusal of technical change, but as a defensive response to the perception of systemic deprofessionalisation. Degradation of pedagogical autonomy: the categories "Questioning Authority" and "School as Workshop" converge towards a shared experience of loss of autonomy and opposition to deprofessionalisation. This suggests that the reform was decoded by teachers not as a curricular innovation but as an intrusion that displaced their role as transformative intellectuals, reducing them to mere executors of technical instructions or manual tasks.

Institutional distrust: the connection between "Political Indoctrination" and "Crisis of Legitimacy" indicates a rupture in the social relationship between the state and the teaching profession. The reform lacked normative legitimacy in the eyes of the implementers, who interpreted the new content as ideological impositions foreign to pedagogy. Administrative saturation: the link between "Excessive Paperwork" and "Bureaucratic Overload" reinforces the literature on the intensification of teachers' work, in which administrative management displaces the substantive function of teaching.

3.2. Parental Rationality: Cost-benefit Calculation and Modern Aspirations

In contrast, parental resistance operates according to an aspirational and pragmatic logic. Here, schooling is instrumentalised for its capacity to generate economic and cultural

capital that differs from what is already available in the rural environment. Rejection of social reproduction: The category “No to Children as Farmers” and its connection with the “Desire for Social Mobility” express one of the clearest interpretive patterns in the analysis. There is an explicit rejection of an education oriented towards life in the countryside within the curriculum. For parents, the school should function as a mechanism that breaks with the agrarian economy rather than one that perpetuates it. The hegemony of the urban: the demand for “Teaching in Spanish” and the rejection of “repeating what is done in the countryside” reveal an “Expectation of New Learning” oriented towards “Urban/Modern Success”. Parental resistance emerges when the school fails to provide the linguistic and cultural codes required for integration into hegemonic modernisation.

Evaluation of educational investment: the category “Unjustified Expense” connects directly with a “Cost–Benefit Calculation”. If the school does not offer additional value (learning that cannot be acquired at home), the investment of family resources in schooling loses its rational justification. In summary, the educational policy produced an involuntary “negative coalition” in which teachers and parents resisted the same object (the reform) but for ontologically different reasons: the former defending the status of the profession and the latter defending the future social status of their children. As can be seen, education undergoes complex and dynamic transformations that emerge from interactions within a specific context (Vanlommel & van den Boom-Muilenburg, 2024).

3.3. Historical Meta-narrative

This perspective considers that teachers’ and institutional resistance can be understood as part of a historical continuity. Here, teachers do not only react to specific top-down policies imposed by governments, but to a long-standing process of unequal distribution of power and resources throughout Latin American history (Guzmán V, 2005; Noel, 2009; Ornelas, 2019). Gentili et al. (2004) shows that many reforms in Latin America are rooted in broader historical dynamics, such as globalisation, neoliberalism and shifts in state models, and that teachers’ resistance is strongly embedded in this strand of educational history.

3.4. Socio-political Meta-narrative

Resistance is not simply a passive reaction but a complex strategic mechanism of political negotiation. Teachers’ unions, parents and institutions use their power, which is often relative, to contest and influence how educational reforms are defined (Maria Raquel et al., 2020; Schneider, 2024). Teachers’ resistance is highly politicised. Unions are crucial actors in reform processes (Gentili et al., 2004; Legarralde et al., 2007; Schneider, 2022), which implies that reforms are not merely technical, but deeply political. Teachers who are organised politically, mainly through unions, may resist or negotiate depending on the democratic institutional context (Hecock, 2014). Bruns et al. (2019) argue that the forms of resistance exercised by teachers are part of a broader socio-political and historical meta-narrative, since quality-oriented reforms may be perceived as being imposed by global or external actors.

3.5. Pedagogical Meta-narrative

From this angle, resistance is not only political but deeply pedagogical. Teachers resist because reforms change, or are expected to change, how they teach, how they relate to students and even their professional autonomy (Ahumada-Bastidas & Sánchez-Huarcaya, 2022; Cerón F & Pasmanik V, 2023). In studies on teacher education (Haller et al., 2021)

and professional identity (Bravo Chacón, 2021), it is evident that teachers resist not only due to working conditions, but also because of their professional self-conception, their initial training and their pedagogical role. Schneider (2024) reaffirms the importance of the organisational structure of teachers' unions for understanding resistance to reforms.

3.6. Cultural Meta-narrative

From a cultural standpoint, resistance emerges from a clash of values. Parents and teachers do not always accept the reform because it runs counter to their understanding of education, their professional identity or their community worldview (Ahumada-Bastidas & Sánchez-Huarcaya, 2022; Guzmán V, 2005). Bravo Chacón (2021) argues that resistance has an identity dimension, since rural teachers hold very particular views of their profession, largely grounded in the contexts where they work, which inevitably shapes and mediates their resistance.

Table 1: Integration of Findings and Related Meta-narratives.

Type of Resistance	Qualitative Findings	Integrative Synthesis	Related Meta-narratives
Teachers	Loss of pedagogical autonomy, distrust towards the State.	The reform is perceived as a mechanism of labour control and discipline rather than as a pedagogical improvement.	Pedagogical, socio-political
Parental	Expressions of frustration at the lack of social mobility and the risk of future impoverishment of their children.	The reform is understood as a limitation on social mobility and a threat to the family project of economic advancement.	Cultural, socio-political.
Overall synthesis		The forms of resistance arise from the interaction between social expectations, institutional limitations and the poorly understood pedagogical contradictions of the militaristic project.	Integration of meta-narratives.

4. Discussion

The Militaristic Educational Reform (1968-1980) is not understood here as a stated-led modernisation policy, but as a project that generated different forms of resistance in the San Martín region. The combination of qualitative methods and meta-narrative analysis shows that these forms of resistance were in no case homogeneous; rather, they emerged from different structural positions, revealing deep tensions between the state and educational actors in the Peruvian Amazon. Teachers' resistance can be explained by the convergence of political control and pedagogical dispute. The pedagogical meta-narrative shows that opposition to the reform was also a struggle over the meaning of teachers' work. The socio-political meta-narrative, in turn, helps explain how the reform sought to build institutional loyalty through mechanisms that many teachers perceived as intrusive.

This interpretation avoids reducing resistance to a simple refusal of change. Rather, it situates teachers' opposition within a conflict over autonomy, professional legitimacy and the conditions under which educational change was expected to be implemented. This reading is consistent with studies showing that reform processes become more fragile when teachers are treated mainly as implementers rather than as actors whose participation is central to institutional change (Akdeniz & Konaklı, 2022; Hamlaoui, 2021).

Parental resistance shows that the reform was perceived as a threat to family projects of social mobility. The qualitative data reveal a persistent concern that the reform would not guarantee economic advancement, access to wider opportunities or protection from

rural poverty. This finding is consistent with the cultural meta-narrative, which interprets schooling as a vehicle for the intergenerational reproduction of family expectations. It also connects with the socio-political meta-narrative, since it exposes the distance between the state's modernising discourse and the concrete aspirations of local communities. Family mobilisation therefore suggests that the acceptance of an educational reform depends not only on its technical content, but also on its capacity to resonate with expectations of personal and collective advancement. As Ansión (1989) notes, these imaginaries are deeply rooted among Peru's popular classes, for whom formal education has historically represented a route out of poverty and discrimination.

The reform also faced serious institutional constraints. Limited resources, weak inter-institutional coordination and insufficient educational infrastructure restricted the implementation of its main policy guidelines. These constraints were not merely operational. They revealed the difficulty of translating a centralised reform project into a region marked by territorial dispersion, cultural diversity and uneven state presence (Hill & Hupe, 2021).

This interpretation is linked to the historical meta-narrative, which shows how centrally designed reforms may reproduce long-standing patterns of neglect toward peripheral territories. The socio-political meta-narrative further suggests that the state gave greater weight to the symbolic construction of a modernising and revolutionary project than to the institutional conditions required for its implementation. Taken together, these forms of resistance show that the militaristic educational reform faced a pedagogical misalignment with teachers and a sociocultural misalignment with families. These dimensions show that the failure of the reform cannot be attributed only to technical deficiencies. It also reflected a deeper conflict between centralised policy design, the expectations of territorial actors and the historical limitations of the state apparatus in peripheral regions. Rather than interpreting resistance as a lack of understanding, the findings suggest that teachers and families evaluated the reform from different but coherent social positions.

This interpretation refines the notion of implementation failure. The reform can be understood as a case in which accumulated resistance constrained policy enactment, especially because teachers and families interpreted the proposed changes from social positions that the state had not sufficiently incorporated into policy design. In San Martín, resistance was not merely an obstacle to change. It was also a sign of the limited legitimacy of a reform whose objectives, procedures and expected benefits were not sufficiently negotiated with local educational actors (Bruns et al., 2019; Hill & Hupe, 2021; Rojas, 2019; Wahidmurni et al., 2024). Finally, Hill and Hupe (2021) characterise this as a "failure of implementation capacity", where policy design does not sufficiently consider the conditions of feasibility in the specific territories where it is to be applied. The evidence analysed in this study suggests that educational reform in historically marginalised territories requires a stronger connection between policy design and local social expectations. In San Martín, the reform was introduced without sufficient attention to regional trajectories, institutional fragility, linguistic diversity and the aspirations that families attached to schooling.

The case also shows that historical analysis should inform the design and interpretation of educational policy. Historical knowledge helps identify how communities interpret schooling, how teachers position themselves before state intervention and why certain reforms generate resistance even when they are framed as transformative. From this perspective, the failure of the reform was not only administrative. It reflected a deeper mismatch between a centralised project of educational change and the meanings that local actors assigned to education, work, language and social advancement.

4.1. Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, it focuses on a single region of the Peruvian Amazon, which restricts the generalisability of the findings to other territories with different institutional and sociocultural configurations. Second, the reconstruction of teachers' and families' experiences relies on retrospective accounts and documentary sources produced in the late 1970s, which may be affected by gaps in the archival record and by the selectivity of individual and institutional memory. Third, the analysis privileges the perspectives of teachers, community leaders and parents, leaving less room for the voices of students and mid-level bureaucrats who also played a role in the implementation process. Future research could address these limitations by conducting comparative studies across regions and by incorporating a broader range of actors and sources.

5. Conclusions

The meta-narrative synthesis presented in this study confirms that resistance should by no means be interpreted as a mere obstacle, but rather as a set of discourses and practices that foreground structural disagreements with the State's reformist policy. It also allows the reform to be read as an attempt to reorganise the educational field according to criteria of political control, without taking into account the sociocultural particularities and institutional inequalities that have existed and persist in the Peruvian Amazon. This study shows that the Militaristic Educational Reform in the San Martín region generated two differentiated forms of resistance, teacher and parental, which reveal its limited impact and weak social legitimacy. The qualitative results, integrated with the historical analysis and the meta-narrative review, suggest that these resistances were not isolated reactions but structural manifestations of tensions between the project of educational change and the sociocultural realities of the Peruvian Amazon.

Teachers' resistance emerged in response to political control expressed through evaluation mechanisms, the bureaucratisation of teachers' work and the loss of pedagogical autonomy. Parental resistance reflected the perception that the reform threatened their children's future, as it did not offer clear goals of progress. Taken together, the findings show a double disorientation, pedagogical and sociocultural, which explains the operational failure of the reform. The meta-narrative synthesis makes it possible to interpret the resistances as expressions of collective agency and as indicators of the distance between educational policies perceived as authoritarian and local expectations. This perspective offers a comprehensive reading to understand why centralised reforms face persistent difficulties in Amazonian and peripheral contexts.

The lessons drawn from the failure of the reform invite reflection on the fact that teachers' work is activist by definition; teachers consistently speak of their active role as reflected in their work with students. Excluding them from educational planning and attempting to turn them only into implementers of government policies is to anticipate the failure of any model of educational change (Tapia et al., 2023). Parental rejection of the educational reform is embedded in a deep anxiety about their children's socioeconomic future. The lessons extrapolated from the results show that parents view education as the main route to progress and well-being, and therefore any model of change must convince them that their children's future will be safeguarded through the education they receive.

Reforms must guarantee progress in the very setting in which they are to be developed. In other words, if reforms are to be driven from the countryside, society must be convinced that the countryside is synonymous with wealth; if the countryside denotes neglect and marginalisation, society will never accept reforms whose starting point is the countryside. Finally, no educational reform can work in any system as long as that system maintains its structural and superstructural gaps intact.

Authors' Declarations

Ethics Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, confidentiality was guaranteed through anonymisation, and no identifying information was recorded or reported. All procedures complied with applicable ethical standards for research involving human participants.

Data Availability Statement

To protect participants' confidentiality and in line with the commitments made during the informed consent process, the qualitative datasets generated and analysed in this study are not publicly available. Anonymised excerpts from interviews and documentary sources may be provided by the corresponding author upon reasonable request, provided that such access does not compromise the anonymity of participants or the ethical agreements established with them.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Appendix A: Examples of Interview Prompts

The semi-structured interviews were guided by open-ended prompts designed to elicit historically situated recollections rather than standardized responses. The following examples illustrate the type of prompts used during the interviews:

1. How did teachers and families understand the objectives of the educational reform at the time?
2. What changes were perceived in everyday school practices after the reform began to be implemented?
3. How was labour-oriented education received by teachers, parents and local communities?
4. What expectations did families associate with schooling during the reform period?
5. How were language and cultural measures interpreted in local schools?
6. What forms of agreement, adaptation or resistance emerged in relation to the reform?
7. How did institutional limitations affect the implementation of the reform in schools?