

Peace Education in Latin America: A Multidimensional Analysis with a Special Focus on Brazil

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Abstract

The study provides a systematic review and multi-dimensional analysis of peace education in Latin America, with a specialised focus on Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Guatemala. This paper is grounded in Galtung's Theory of positive peace and the 4Rs framework of educational justice – redistribution, recognition, representation, and reconciliation. This study examines how education can serve as a critical space for preventing violence and fostering social cohesion. The authors analyse diverse national strategies: Colombia's mandatory Catedra de la Paz rooted in post-conflict reconciliations; Guatemala's focus on intercultural bilingual education following the 1996 peace accords; and Argentina's paradigm of democratic citizenship, currently facing challenges from authoritarian educational shifts. A central component of this paper is an exploration of Brazil's educational evolution, particularly the Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) and its 10 general competencies, designed to foster empathy and dialogue. Despite these advancements, the paper identifies persistent obstacles, including the coloniality of knowledge, structural inequalities, and the utilitarian pressure of global capitalism, which often reduce education to a service rather than a fundamental right. The research concludes that for peace education to be transformative, it must move beyond being a subject on the syllabus to become a strategic investment in social justice, emotional well-being, and the deconstruction of cultural violence. Ultimately, the study advocates for a humanistic approach that empowers the next generation to build a society rooted in solidarity and mutual respect.

Keywords: Peace Education, Latin America, Democratic Consolidation, Educational Justice, Positive Peace

1. Introduction

There is a saying that's often heard throughout Latin America: "Generally speaking, this part of the world is no bed of roses". This means that, beyond the social inequalities that span generations across many countries, scenarios of intense economic crisis and heightened political tensions — culminating in coups d'état, the suppression of rights, repression, and the erosion of democracy — end up following a cyclical pattern: it moves forward a little bit, only to face setbacks. The way out of this situation most often involves massive investment in education to provide access to knowledge, to development, and to future opportunities for an entire population. However, most often, the rule of the game of power is to keep investments in this area meagre, or, when they do occur, they do not result in a consequential transformation of tremendous intensity that will be felt for many generations to come. Things move at a

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baby's steps, because small advances, most often, also mean maintaining power for those at the top of the social pyramid.

Central to Latin America's political narrative is the recognition that education has often been complicit in reproducing inequalities. Policy frameworks prioritise standardised, market-oriented education while marginalising sociohistorical and culturally specificities. By reinforcing Eurocentric epistemologies and global capitalist hierarchies, policies often reproduce a colonial mentality of power and social structure, neglect structural inequalities, devalue diverse knowledge, and perpetuate educational inequities rather than fostering contextualised and emancipatory learning (Simão et al., 2024). In this scenario, Latin America's peace-education agenda emerged as one of the responses, seeking — though sometimes failing — to ensure that political authoritarian tendencies do not once again disrupt the social fabric.

From the Caribbean to the Southern Cone, the region has diverse histories, institutions, and conflict legacies of Spanish and Portuguese colonisation, followed by a twentieth century marked by military dictatorships and deep-seated structural violence (Aravena, 2025). Nevertheless, peace education has emerged not as a peripheral elective but as an essential regional necessity for democratic consolidation. The historical transition from authoritarian regimes to representative democracies in the 1980s, most notably in Argentina in 1983 (Basantia, 2025) and Brazil in 1985 (Acharya, 2025), facilitated a profound re-examination of how schools shape national identity and civic behaviour (McColl et al., 2025). However, both countries are grappling with political polarisation, which often brings to the fore the idea that the solutions to the region's problems lie in adopting authoritarian political practices.

Nevertheless, the “Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development” (UNESCO, 2025; Aravena, 2025) serves as a modern lens through which regional policies are being re-evaluated. Beyond those necessities, Latin America still faces emerging threats that transcend the traditional definition of peace. Interstate peace has generally been maintained throughout the 21st century. However, internal security is increasingly compromised by transnational organised crime, including human trafficking, arms smuggling, and illegal mining, and violence is all too common in schools, whether perpetrated by students or by outsiders (Aravena, 2025). Latin America adopts an educational approach to peace, exemplified by attempts to implement peace education from a democratic standpoint (Pérez Fuentes & Álvarez Maestre, 2021). However, the results of these attempts are still up for debate.

Thus, this study provides a systematic review of peace education in Latin America, including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Guatemala. It begins by establishing the theoretical, multidimensional framework of peace education, then provides a comparative analysis of diverse national experiences. Particular attention is paid to Colombia's mandatory Cátedra de la Paz (Morales, 2019), and the precarious yet resilient efforts in post-conflict Guatemala. The core of the analysis is reserved for Brazil, where the Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) represents a substantial attempt to standardise essential learning while fostering the socio-emotional skills necessary for a peaceful global citizenship, without, however, overlooking other aspects that are important to education (De Araújo et al., 2025) — this analysis also examined the role of collective trauma in this process of developing tools for peace in education. Through this inquiry, the research seeks to debate whether these educational reforms are truly transformative or remain constrained by the utilitarian logic of global capitalism.

2. Peace as a Multidimensional Process

Theoretically, the concept of peace has shifted from a static definition of negative peace — the absence of armed conflict (Webel & Galtung, 2007) — toward a dynamic, multidimensional process (Pérez Fuentes

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& Álvarez Maestre, 2021). This evolution is also driven by a growing recognition that Latin America's persistent challenges, particularly social exclusion, inequality, youth vulnerability, and weakened governance, are deeply connected to structural conditions that sustain violence. That education can either reproduce these dynamics or serve as a critical space for prevention, citizen security, and peacebuilding.

The concept of educational justice within the broader context of peace education aims precisely to discuss and integrate the roles of equity, equality, and critical awareness to minimise violence and the many forms of exclusion in daily life. Students, therefore, in the school setting would need, in addition to academic skills, to learn non-violent, argumentative methods for conflict resolution, with an emphasis on emotional balance and social growth. Adan (2025) argues that in countries experiencing constant political turmoil, the main challenges to achieving educational justice include profound educational disparities and generational traumas, such as the effects of colonialism in Latin America.

Thus, implementing educational justice is an important step toward educational peace and toward overcoming transgenerational trauma. In this regard, the implementation of educational peace can be continuously evaluated, in theory, through the four basic principles of educational justice, known as the 4Rs framework, which serves as a comprehensive approach for assessing whether educational reforms address their problems.

The first of these principles is redistribution. Here, the focus is on equitable access to educational resources, and, naturally, the analysis centres on educational reforms and changes in public policy to understand whether these are, in fact, redistributive (Novelli et al., 2017). In this context, Brazil, for example, is tragically caricatured as a “Belindia” (Bacha, 2015), an anachronism formed by the combination of characteristics from Belgium and India, meaning, having a financial elite that often views wealth through Americanised or Eurocentric lenses, and a society plagued by extreme poverty. Redistribution is only efficient if there is recognition. In this second principle, what is at stake is precisely the appreciation of cultural diversity, especially regarding its integration into the curriculum (Novelli et al., 2017). Classroom discussions on cultural identity, civic education, and citizenship are important means for democratic development in everyday social life. In this regard, Guatemala's focus on Mayan languages and Brazil's inclusion of Afro-Brazilian history are critical acts of recognition that aim to dismantle epistemic violence (Kaibarta, 2025; Nadeem, 2025).

The third principle is representation. Here, the goal is precisely to assess how educational policies foster engagement among the diverse stakeholders that make up society. The central point is precisely the distribution of power, thereby enabling community participation in school governance and preserving fundamental rights and freedoms — with a special focus here on diversity within the school context. Decentralisation policies in Argentina, for example, aim to give local communities greater agency, though their success is often hampered by centralising tendencies (Basantia, 2025). However, the current far-right government has spared no effort to disengage the state from education, opening the door to predatory commercial practices, which allows it to be viewed more as a service, a consumer relationship, than as a fundamental right.

Last, but not least, is reconciliation. The focus here is on past and present injustices to foster social cohesion, connections, and historical understanding linked to the very process of citizenship, as well as to build trust in government and institutions, and among the diverse groups that make up a society (Novelli et al., 2017). Post-conflict educational reforms, such as those implemented in Colombia, for example, can support historical memory, amplify marginalised narratives, and strengthen social healing by integrating conflict history, dialogue, and truth-recovery processes into peacebuilding education (Rivera-Lozada et al., 2021). However, these processes are only sustainable when a society understands that collective

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trauma is transgenerational and, unfortunately, despite many efforts, continues to permeate the daily lives of its members. Thus, reconciliation also requires constant attention to collective traumas.

3. The Role of Positive Peace and Human Rights

For Galtung's theory of positive peace (Galtung, 1976, 1990), the presence of social justice, equality, and social systems that eliminate structural and cultural violence is fundamental to reversing systemic patterns of violence. His critics, on the other hand, believe that his theoretical work contains significant ideological flaws, such as the idea of peace as a form of perfect society, or even the notion of diluting violence through its structural element — such as poverty — which would, unfortunately, end up downplaying the countless ills that conflict-ridden situations generate. Despite this criticism, the triangle of violence, as it has come to be known, helps us understand the many facets of social destruction. This destruction is present in acts of violence themselves — direct acts such as physical and verbal aggression — which are often just the tip of the iceberg of a much broader social problem. It is also present in structural violence, caused by divisions in society and often reproduced in public institutions, preventing the population from accessing basic rights. Moreover, finally, there is cultural violence — that is, the narratives used to legitimise the multiple forms of violence that permeate a society (Galtung, 2015; Chisari, 2024).

Peace cannot be achieved without a social understanding of this triangle. Novelli et al. (2017) argue that positive peace goes beyond merely ending direct violence. It refers to the transformation of the structural, political, economic, social, and cultural injustices that cause conflict in the first place. In the 4Rs framework, positive peace is understood as peace grounded in social justice and reconciliation, in which societies address inequalities through redistribution, recognition, representation, and reconciliation to create sustainable peace. This means building conditions that remove structural and cultural violence while fostering equitable participation, social cohesion, and long-term justice. In this regard, the 2023 UNESCO Recommendation further clarifies this vision, stating that peace requires transforming social and economic structures to ensure political, climate, and cultural justice (UNESCO, 2025). Education is thus viewed as a means of fostering dignity through language and interaction, in which communicative dignity serves as a tool for conflict transformation (Gomes de Matos, 2005, 2012; Carvalho et al., 2025). Table 1 presents the dimensions of peace, manifestation in education, and regional examples.

Table 1: Multidimensional Dimensions of Peace and Educational Manifestations in Latin America

Dimension of Peace	Educational Manifestation	Regional Example
Interpersonal	Conflict resolution and empathy training.	Project Justice and Education (Brazil).
Structural	Policies for equity and inclusion.	National Education Law (Argentina).
Cultural	Decolonial and intercultural curricula.	Bilingual Education (Guatemala).
Environmental	Sustainability and climate awareness.	COP30 Environmental Policy (Brazil).

Source: Compiled by authors

Beyond these examples, the UNESCO regional meeting in Santo Domingo reinforced that peace is not merely a subject to be taught but a mindset to be cultivated through transformative education, integrating environmental ethics, the arts, and civic ethics across all levels of learning (UNESCO, 2025). The tangible outcomes of this meeting were the revitalisation of the debate — particularly regarding the climate crisis, hate speech, and, above all, direct conflict — and the positioning of education as key to achieving lasting peace. The focus here would be on educational transformation, fostering greater social

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engagement with these issues and advocating for peace. To this end, the regional effort also requires alignment of the countries' educational policies. Moreover, this step requires extensive negotiation (Oswald-Spring, 2026).

4. Comparative Peace Education Frameworks in Latin America

One would be a fool to think that all this effort for peace would be disconnected from economic outcomes. National frameworks vary significantly, shaped by their unique historical and economic trajectories and political ambitions. Moreover, it is possible to correlate the stability of the Human Development Index (HDI) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with educational attainment. Table 2 presents a comparative socio-economic and educational policy profile of selected Latin American countries, highlighting that Argentina and Brazil possess stronger institutional and infrastructural capacities for educational reform than less economically developed states.

Table 2: Comparative Socio-Economic and Educational Policy Profile of Selected Latin American

Country	GDP Growth ¹	HDI Rank (Value) ²	Literacy Rate ³	Educational Focus
Argentina	-1.3%	47 (0.865)	99%	Argentina emphasises inclusive, equitable education, social rights, diversity, and democratic citizenship through National Education Law 26,206.
Brazil	3.4%	84 (0.786)	95%	Brazil's BNCC and National Education Plan stress competency-based curriculum, monitoring, equity, and national development.
Colombia	1.6%	83 (0.788)	95%	Colombia is better framed in terms of peacebuilding, reconciliation, civic memory, and post-conflict education.
Guatemala	3.7%	137 (0.662)	82%	Guatemala focuses on intercultural bilingual education, diversity, post-conflict reconciliation, and equity.

Source: Compiled by authors

However, a common regional trend is the decentralisation of education, which accelerated in the 1990s during the resurgence of liberal democracy. Argentina restructured its system to decentralise secondary schools to the provincial level (Basantia, 2025). Colombia transferred basic education services to departments and municipalities (Nadeem, 2025). While intended to improve efficiency and responsiveness to local needs, decentralisation has often increased regional disparities, particularly in rural areas of Guatemala, where infrastructure remains critically underdeveloped (Basantia, 2025; Kaibarta, 2025). Nevertheless, the region is grappling with polarisation, with Argentina and Brazil making public education a constant target of the far right (Wanschelbaum et al., 2024).

Even with these political setbacks, most nations in the region are attempting to transition from traditional teacher-talk classrooms to student-centric learning (Basantia, 2025; Nadeem, 2025). Colombia's Escuela Nueva model is a pioneer in this regard, transforming rural education into a student-centric process that nurtures social-emotional skills (Nadeem, 2025). Similarly, the Brazilian BNCC prioritises the

¹ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG>

² https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2025_HDR/HDR25_Statistical_Annex_HDI_Table.pdf

³ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS>

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mobilisation of knowledge over mere memorisation, emphasising critical thinking and creativity (Acharya, 2025). Although these policies are often presented as innovative, it is important to examine them closely to assess the benefits and drawbacks of adopting certain political perspectives in education.

5. The Argentine Paradigm on Peace Education

The Argentine paradigm is characterised by a commitment to education, even as the country faces an ultraliberal political phase. A particularly inspiring example of this process is the work of CoPaz (Peace Builders), which seeks to foster a culture of peace through the arts, philosophy, and sport (Morales, 2019; Barrios et al., 2023). However, these actions alone are not enough to sustain a democracy. It is worth remembering that Argentina was, for many years, the only country to bring generals and other officials to trial for crimes against the rule of law, in a trial known as “The Trial of the Juntas” held in 1985. In this context, Brazil granted amnesty to its generals for the last dictatorship in the country between 1964 and 1985; however, it recently convicted senior officers and a former president for attempted coup and crimes against democracy in 2023.

In the field of education, more specifically, Argentina’s 2006 “National Education Law (Ley n. 26.206)” established education as a state-guaranteed individual and social right (Freedom of Thought Report, 2020), explicitly embedding a social justice ethos in schooling. The Ministry of Education notes that this law was a fundamental step toward building a more just society (Ministry of Education of the Nation, 2022). Under 26.206, schooling became free and compulsory from early childhood through the end of secondary school (roughly 13 years) (Porto, 2016). Argentina now boasts an adult literacy rate of about 99%. Key programs have expanded opportunities for marginalised groups; for example, the FinEs adult education program helps youths and adults finish secondary school, and national literacy campaigns — including the Alfabetizar para la Libertad prison program — ensure inmates have full access to education (UNESCO, 2021).

Nevertheless, these actions have not dampened the current government’s appetite for cuts to the education budget, amongst other areas. Díez-Gutiérrez et al. (2024) argue that Argentina has become a contemporary example of the emergence of a new authoritarian educational order in Latin America, a kind of living laboratory for radical neoliberal policies. In this context, public education, a human right, has come to be characterised by government agents and their followers as being permeated by “Marxist indoctrination” and “brainwashing”. This, although frivolous and criminal, is a strategy aimed at delegitimising public education and justifying the privatisation of reforms. The price is paid by teachers, whose work becomes stigmatised; students, who lose an education focused on humanistic formation to gain access to one that only prepares them for the lower end of the job market; and the entire community, which often watches, immobile, the collapse of democracy in their country.

Beyond these political setbacks, observers also note gaps in Argentina’s curriculum. Explicitly, life skills and peace education are often said to be underdeveloped. For instance, Mayol Lassalle (2023) highlights that Argentina’s education goals under SDG 4.7 emphasise human rights, democratic citizenship, and peace goals that have not yet been fully realised in separate classroom programs. Today, topics like conflict resolution, well-being, and peace tend to appear implicitly (for example, in social studies and literature) rather than in dedicated courses on peace and happiness. Analysts thus call for a more structured inclusion of these themes in the national curriculum (Mayol Lassalle, 2023). However, these ideas are now under attack.

6. The Colombian Peace Education Context

Colombia's peace education context is perhaps the most intense in the region, as the nation seeks to rebuild itself in 2016 following the peace agreement that ended more than fifty years of internal armed conflict with the FARC. Montaña-Bardales & Palacios (2025) argue that the end of the armed conflict led to increased access to education, especially in the regions most affected by violence. However, these gains were not enough to reduce dropout rates, which remain high. After many years of exclusion, many young people returned to school, but this return also brought with it the need to address the collective traumas left by the guerrilla war, in addition to learning gaps. The peace agreement, essential for this country and for Latin America, did indeed improve overall educational conditions; nevertheless, it also highlighted many historical inequalities exacerbated by violence, necessitating the implementation of compensatory public policies, social investments, and educational recovery strategies.

In 2014, the Colombian government enacted Law 1732, creating the Cátedra de la Paz (Peace Chair) (Morales & Gebre, 2021), a compulsory course for all educational levels (Nadeem, 2025). The course was designed to: (a) strengthen a culture of peace in the educational system; (b) promote peaceful relationships, especially among young people (Morales, 2021); (c) reframe historical memory and reconciliation; (d) cultivate citizens who can cultivate peace; and (e) provide a flexible and contextualised approach to peace education, allowing each institution to address its specific needs and choose topics that respond to its local community (Morales, 2021). The Citizenship Standards complement this by integrating knowledge of law, democracy, and the constitution into national evaluations such as the Sabre exam (Nadeem, 2025).

One point to note is that this framework was not conceived merely to teach peace, but to transform the school culture, thus seeking to shift an entire generation away from the historical traumas that have plagued this country and distance it from authoritarianism. Despite its legal mandate, it has faced substantial implementation barriers, including weak institutional support, insufficient teacher training, and limited pedagogical clarity regarding how peace principles should be embedded (Sanchez, 2024). Qualitative research further suggests that many adolescents in lower-resourced communities perceived official peace education narratives as disconnected from their lived realities, where gangs, drugs, and localised violence remained more immediate concerns than abstract national reconciliation. Together, these findings reveal a broader tension within Colombian peace education. While the state institutionalised peacebuilding through curriculum, persistent structural inequality and ongoing violence often undermined the perceived authenticity and transformative potential among the very youth it sought to engage. Trauma, in this context, still needs to be re-signified.

7. Guatemala: The 1996 Peace Accords and Bilingualism

In Guatemala, education is a central component of the 1996 Peace Accords, which sought to end 36 years of civil war and genocide that targeted Indigenous Mayan populations (Carr-Brulard, 2021). In sum, this led to a 50% increase in the education budget and an integrative curriculum that supports bilingual and intercultural education (Anderson, 2001).

However, Kurtenbach (2019) argues that, in general, Latin America managed to end wars and, in doing so, hold elections that set democracy in motion. However, this effort is often insufficient to eliminate violence or fully realise democratic processes. For Guatemala, this means that peace, in fact, ended the conflict, but it was not enough to minimise inequality, impunity, and the economic power of the elites. Ultimately, it is a limited peace, permeated by violence, exclusion, and institutional weaknesses.

Despite those major considerations, in the Latin American educational context, Martínez, Rodríguez, and Goyzueta (2026) indicate that the interdependence between family stability and psychological elements such as self-esteem and emotions drives well-being. Like other countries, Guatemala has "familism" as a social support network for conflict resolution. Thus, education policies would also need to transcend socioeconomic factors by integrating emotional support, spaces to listen to trauma, strengthening personal agency, and fostering holistic, resilient well-being for peace, because that is the ultimate goal.

8. Deep Dive: Brazil's Peace Education Evolution and the Path

Brazil offers an important example of educational transformation. As the most populous Latin American country, it has been a country of struggle between nationalist-dictatorial projects and democratic, human rights-oriented reforms. Nevertheless, Acharya (2025) describes that Brazil's education system has undergone four major phases that defined its current peace education ethos. The first one is the Vargas Era (1930-1945), a nationalist dictatorship characterised by censorship and the centralised education through the "Ministry of Education and Public Health". This was a time of enormous political contradictions and tensions, to put it elegantly, marked by a dictatorial project to modernise the state and by the attempt to mould national identity through education, a very similar project of centralising European regimes of its time. The main landmark was the Francisco Campos Reform, in 1931, which sought to organise the education system, giving it a centralised national unity. The dictatorship also encouraged technical and vocational education by creating SENAI in 1942, as the country sought to transition from rural work to an industrial society. However, the Manifesto of the Pioneers of the Escola Nova (New School), in 1932, exposed the aggravating factor of educational duality, which separated elite education from the technical training of the masses, in an education system permeated by censorship and jingoistic ideology (Medeiros, 2020).

The second phase was the Military Dictatorship (1964-1985), in which the government removed subjects such as philosophy and sociology from the curriculum, focusing on vocational training for the popular class to ensure they were oriented toward work rather than critical thinking — a classic dictatorship move. During the military dictatorship, education was guided by ideological control, persecution, imprisonment, torture, and death of students and teachers opposed to the regime, and by an attempt at technical modernisation that, in the end, further aggravated the precariousness of Brazilian education. Among the main projects were the 1968 University Reform, which implemented changes to the teaching career, abolishing the chair system in favour of departmental organisation, and aimed to remove power from professors and centralise administration in the interests of the dictatorial government. Education also began to include compulsory vocational training to formalise the idea that education needs a purpose; in this view, the objective was to train docile and obedient workers. Subjects such as "Moral and Civic Education" are used to disseminate the regime's values. Furthermore, the fragmentation of the curriculum and the prioritisation of technical teaching deepened the gap between public and private education, largely encouraged by the military, reinforcing the idea of education as a service rather than a fundamental human right (Bom et al., 2026).

The democratic restoration in 1985 was a turning point. The 1988 Constitution acknowledged education as a fundamental human right. Another fundamental milestone was the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education (LDB) of 1996 (Lei n. 9.394/1996) (Borges & Silva, 2026), which reorganised school levels, followed by the creation of FUNDEF (later FUNDEB) to ensure resource allocation. Notwithstanding these democratic advances, this was a period that confronted the legacies of historical inequality and illiteracy, as well as economic crises stemming from the military dictatorship, which limited per-student investment. The fragmentation between municipal and state networks hindered the creation of an efficient collaborative regime. However, it continues to create difficulties for the system today. On the other hand,

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the rapid expansion of private higher education and the persistent age-grade gap in basic education highlighted the challenge of reconciling universal access with equitable educational quality (Anjos, Santos, & de Mari, 2026).

Meanwhile, the BNCC Era (2018-Present) exemplifies the Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC), which tries to unify a set of competences for all students. The BNCC has established itself as the primary initiative to reduce educational inequalities by defining essential learning objectives. Among its advances, the organisation of a curriculum focused on developing ten general competencies, the integration of cognitive and socio-emotional dimensions, and the attempt to modernise the New High School through formative pathways stand out. However, implementation faces severe obstacles. Among the main ones are the lack of infrastructure in public networks to offer specialisation pathways and the need for continuing education for teachers, who, in themselves, face a scenario of political polarisation and professional devaluation. Standardisation also disregards Brazilian regional and cultural diversity, with the justification of focusing on large-scale assessments, which may narrow the curriculum rather than making it more comprehensive and plural (Pinto et al., 2025). The BNCC identifies ten competencies that serve as the guiding principles for Brazilian peace education. Table 3 presents these 10 general competencies in the face of peace education.

Table 3: The 10 General Competencies and their Alignment with Peace Education

Competencies	Focus	Peace Education Alignment
Knowledge	Historically constructed, explaining reality and building a fair society	Historically constructed knowledge, from diverse cultures about the world, contributes to building a democratic society (Assumpção & Castral, 2024).
Scientific Thinking	Intellectual curiosity and scientific approach	Formulate solutions, and create innovations – with ethical considerations and for social benefit (Assumpção & Castral, 2024).
Artistic Sense	Cultural expressions: participate in the arts	Foster creativity, mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue.
Communication	Multi-modal languages; mutual understanding	Use diverse languages and communication modes to foster dialogue.
Digital Culture	Ethical use of ICT; meaningful info access	Use digital technologies and information ethically, critically, and creatively, promoting respectful online communication.
Work and Life Project	Career & citizenship: ethical choices in diversity	Understand work relations by making life choices with autonomy, critical awareness, social responsibility and respect for equity
Argumentation	Human Rights: defend ideas with reliable data	Argue using reliable, social responsibility, and democratic values.

Self-care	Emotional health, self-awareness and handling emotions	Recognising one's own and others' emotions and limits (with self-awareness and self-regulation) in a context of human diversity
Empathy	Diversity & respect; dialogue, conflict resolution, no prejudice	Respect diversity. Reject prejudice.
Responsibility	Ethics & Solidarity; autonomy, resilience	Understand that ethics and solidarity are the bases of democracy

Source: Compiled by authors

Despite the BNCC's progressive language, critics argue that it still reflects a utilitarian logic that prioritises training individuals for the labour market over genuine human development. The limitation of Afro-Brazilian, Indigenous, and Quilombola knowledge from many local initiatives continues to constitute a form of coloniality of knowledge (Simão et al., 2024). Furthermore, the precariousness of teaching work, with teachers often working in classrooms lacking almost everything – from basic elements like chalk or markers to teaching materials – is now confronted with political polarisation that devalues and attacks the work of teachers, reducing it to an instrument of political alienation and thereby weakening democracy itself. The lack of continuous teacher training further compounds this scenario, and many teachers feel ill-equipped, pedagogically and psychologically, to handle the high levels of school violence.

Brazil's peace education, on the other hand, is distinguished by several unique initiatives that seek to connect the curriculum to the burning realities of urban and digital life. The family as partner, anti-violence and citizenship programs, and digital well-being and media education are the special features of peace education in Brazil. Research conducted in states like Ceará and Paraná emphasises that families and communities must be seen as partners in education. Therefore, effective peace education in Brazil would involve building relational trust to ensure sustainable partnerships and implementing truly democratic school management, with families having a role in decision-making (Nóra & Morris, 2025).

In this context, the Fortaleza Declaration, written at the Global Education Meeting (GEM, 2024), made by the Brazilian Ministry of Education (MEC) alongside the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Prudenciano de Souza & Velez de Castro, 2025), sought to advocate for increased global investment in education, inclusion, and the guarantee of education as a fundamental right. This letter aims to foster social cohesion and security while tackling violence in and around schools. Furthermore, the declaration highlights the need to fight racism, xenophobia, and discrimination to create resilient societies.

However, Sandeski (2024) highlights that the Fortaleza Declaration is, in essence, yet another attempt at international articulation in the name of defending public education, which, in turn, is often neglected by successive governments. It proposes cooperation between countries of the Global South. However, many of these countries frequently focus the solution to educational problems on teachers, as if everything that happens in school were merely a reflection of human capital conditions. The letter emphasises the need for appreciation, democratic management, and the critical use of technologies. However, it states that all this effort must be a collective mobilisation with the ultimate goal of lasting peace in Brazilian schools. This objective, unfortunately, has yet to be achieved.

9. Discussion on Peace Education in Latin America: Trend Analysis

Peace education in Latin America has emerged as a critical response to the region's diverse history of internal conflicts, military dictatorships, and deep-seated systemic inequalities. While all four nations, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Guatemala, understand how important it is to cultivate a culture of peace through their educational frameworks, their approaches vary significantly in terms of legislative formalisation, curricular integration, and historical drivers.

Primarily, the motivation for integrating peace education differs across these nations. In Colombia and Guatemala, peace education is a direct legacy of the end of long-term violent conflicts. Colombia's initiatives are rooted in the 2016 peace agreement with FARC (Nadeem, 2025). Similarly, Guatemala's reform is tied to the 1996 Peace Accords, which were designed to transmit values within a multicultural society after a 36-year civil war (Kaibarta, 2025). In contrast, Argentina and Brazil view peace education more through the lens of social rights, democratic stability, the mitigation of inequality, and violence in schools.

In Argentina, the focus is on democratic citizenship and overcoming the scars and traumas of its military dictatorship (1976–1983) (Basantia, 2025). Brazil's framework emphasises comprehensive education as a tool to address systemic inequalities and urban violence (Acharya, 2025). In Brazil, in response to the traumas and damages of the Military Dictatorship, the Brazilian government created the National Truth Commission (CNV) between 2012 and 2014. The final report counted 191 deaths and 243 disappearances, totalling 434 violations, considered serious, committed between 1964 and 1985. These included torture, executions, and disappearances. Despite these findings, no one was criminally convicted due to the 1979 Amnesty Law, proposed by the military themselves.

In the educational context, meanwhile, Colombia stands out as the trendsetter for legislative formalisation. Through Law 1732 of 2014, the government established a compulsory peace program. It includes a general theoretical framework and specific learning goals for grades K-11 (Nadeem, 2025). Brazil, however, follows a competency-based model. Its National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC), approved in 2017, includes 10 general competencies, the 9th of which explicitly directs students to engage in argumentative and seek peaceful conflict resolution (Acharya, 2025). This is still far from reality. Guatemala and Argentina show less structural formalisation. In Guatemala, although the 1996 Peace Accords mandated a multicultural history and culture curriculum, critics note it has not been fully implemented. Peace education is indirectly integrated into subjects like Social Studies and Citizenship Education. Argentina still requires greater attention (Basantia, 2025).

One thing about direct versus indirect approaches for these educational projects in Colombia is that it can be perceived as direct. Peace is a standalone, mandatory subject that focuses on historical memory, peaceful interaction, and democratic participation (Nadeem, 2025). In Brazil, however, peace is not a separate subject. However, it is woven into the curriculum as an integrative competency through cross-cutting issues such as human rights education and ethno-racial relations (Acharya, 2025). In Guatemala, on the other hand, the concepts of peace are embedded in civic education, which values ethnic and cultural group identities and promotes relationships framed by an indirect culture of peace (Kaibarta, 2025). Argentina, meanwhile, has a pedagogical, discursive approach in which teachers use language to debate conflict and violence (Basantia, 2025).

Table 4: Comparative Summary Table

Feature	Argentina	Brazil	Colombia	Guatemala
Primary Driver	Post-dictatorship Democracy	Social Equity/Inequality	Post-Conflict Reconciliation	1996 Peace Accords
Formal Law	National Education Law (2006)	BNCC (2018)	Law 1732 (Cátedra de la Paz)	CNB (2005)
Curricular Status	Underdeveloped	Competency-based (Integrated-attempt)	Mandatory standalone course	Integrated into Citizen Ed
Focus Area	Solidarity and Diversity, now under attack	Empathy and Dialogue	Historical Memory/ Democracy	Multiculturalism/ Mayan Culture

Source: Compiled by authors

10. Some Caveats and Final Considerations

Although this article focuses on specific educational elements, it is important to note that the educational landscape of Latin America is a crucial arena where the preservation of democracy is actively contested in the classroom. The region's shift from a narrow focus to understanding that lasting stability is impossible without peace education. This evolution suggests that for peace education to be effective, it must transcend being merely a subject on a syllabus and become a strategic investment in social cohesion.

The path forward for the region lies in closing gaps between institutionalised policy and reality. While legislative landmarks such as Colombia's Cátedra de la Paz or Brazil's BNCC provide essential frameworks, they may fail to translate into practice if they do not resonate with the lived experiences of youth who face immediate threats of violence and inequality. To realise their potential, these changes must abandon a utilitarian perspective that regards students only as future labour for global capitalism and instead adopt a more humanistic approach.

Furthermore, the regional experience indicates that recognition of diverse cultural and ethnic identities, while a major achievement in countries like Guatemala and Brazil, is only one part of a larger puzzle. In the absence of a simultaneous commitment to resource redistribution and inclusive decision-making, the enduring coloniality-of-power thinking will perpetuate the disparities these educational reforms aim to address. True educational justice requires a curriculum that devalues Eurocentrism and Americanism and instead prioritises emancipatory learning.

As Latin America looks toward the goals set by the Fortaleza Declaration, the scope of peace education must continue to expand, integrating well-being, environmental ethics, and emotional health into the core of the learning experience and giving new meaning to decades of trauma. The success of Latin American peace education will ultimately be measured not by the passage of laws but by its ability to foster a democratic culture that empowers the next generation to dismantle cultural violence and build a society rooted in solidarity and mutual respect.

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