



Philosophical Polemics, School Reform and Nation-Building in Uruguay, 1868-1915

Reforma Vareliana and Batllismo from a Transnational Perspective

By Jens R. Hentschke

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This monograph revisits Uruguay's emergence as Latin America's first welfare state democracy, associated with President José Batlle y Ordóñez (1903-7, 1911-15) and his Krausist leanings. Central to Uruguay's belated polity formation and nation building was its school reform, destined to erase frontier backwardness. It started with the foundation of the Society of the Friends of Popular Education in 1868, culminated in José Pedro and Jacobo Varela's transformation of primary and normal schooling in the 1870s and 1880s, and was driven by US liberal pedagogy and Spencerian positivism. Batllistas distanced themselves from the Varelas since they had lent their services to military dictators. Yet, as Hentschke argues, continuity in

change prevailed over the rupture of 1903, with positivism and neo-Idealism interacting in the continuation of the education reform. By placing Uruguay into the broader context of what scholars have called the "Corridor of Ideas" from Santiago de Chile through Buenos Aires and Montevideo to Porto Alegre, Hentschke shows how the country acted as a crossroads of intellectuals and a laboratory for the contestation, assimilation, and merger of global and autochthonous political and pedagogical philosophies.

Jens R. Hentschke is Professor of Latin American History and Politics at Newcastle University in the U.K.

»The history of public education in Uruguay is one of Latin America's great, yet understudied, success stories. In this monumental book, Jens Hentschke provides us with a rich intellectual, social, and cultural history of how education intersected with the challenges of nation building and promoted the rights of citizenship in one of Latin America's most progressive nations. Hentschke's mastery of the region and the subject shows in his careful tracing of Uruguayan educational reforms within the broader development of public education across Latin America. Without a doubt, this book is the definitive study on the role of education in this pivotal moment in Uruguayan history.«

Professor William Acree, Washington University in St. Louis

»Jens R Hentschke's book represents an original study of nineteenth-century school reforms and their impact on nation building and modernization in Latin America's Southern Cone. By integrating history, philosophy, and education and choosing a supranational approach, it offers new perspectives and insight and will constitute a reference work for scholars in the region.«

Professor Susana Monreal, Catholic University of Uruguay



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