BOOK REVIEW
Media Education in Latin America

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Editorial Board

Mateus, J., Andrada, P., & Quiroz, M. (2020). *Media Education in Latin America.* Routledge.

The editors of *Media Education in Latin America* offer this book as a showcase of the rich traditions and current status of media education and *educommunicación* in Latin America. Mateus, Andrada, and Quiroz (2020) present this collection of chapters as an English publication in order to open dialogue and overcome barriers that hinder a reciprocal examination of media education. This book combats a "hegemonic myopia on the part of Anglosphere Communication research" (by Hoechsmann, p. 259) found in North American and Eurocentric media education spheres. This compilation is an important contribution to the global conversations in media education and provides a multi-layered exploration into the varied histories and struggles occurring in the field of media education in Latin America.

This book will be of interest to media educators, students and researchers looking to expand their understanding of global media education landscapes. The book is divided into two distinct parts. The first section provides local narratives from eleven Latin American countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The second part of the book shares critical essays that are not constrained by nationality but push the boundaries of literacy and media education related topics from a Latin American perspective.

The first section of the book presents a country-by-country examination of media education and *educommunicación* following a structured format of five dimensions: socio-cultural contexts, regulator frameworks, social and institutional actors, teacher training, and academic production. Knowing the chapter framework, and the guiding questions as provided by the editors (Table 1.1, p. 4), assists the reader to better understand the content in these chapters. While each can be read as a stand-alone exploration into the selected country, a fulsome understanding of the Latin American context can be gained by reading every chapter while drawing parallels between historical events, influences that span borders, and connections that illuminate the meaning of *educommunicación*.

While a summary of each of the eleven country reports is not possible in this review, it is worth noting a few highlights into the historical, cultural, political, educational contexts and issues. Struggle and activism are underlying themes in most of these country reports, with authors relating varying degrees of violence, censorship, propaganda, theft of funds, and media control by government and/or corporations. Many authors reflect on the impact of dictatorships and the establishment of laws relating to communication, media, and media education when the country returned to democratic political structures. Regulation and laws for each country are revealed with some enacted in recent years as a result of public protest as exemplified in the report from Venezuela (Miquilena et al., 2020, p. 169). The integration of unique country-specific elements is of particular interest. For example, in Bolivia the public company Quipus created for the distribution of computers to schools draws its name from the famous Incan accounting tool 'khipu', meaning knot, which was used for accounting (Zeballos, 2020, p. 39). In El Salvador, the *El Faro* project was developed (Parducci et al., 2020, p. 110) to enhance critical media skills after decades of civil unrest, dictatorship, and violence targeting journalism and free speech. From Chile we learn of *El Mercurio de los Estudiantes,* a student produced online newspaper, supported by the newspaper *El Mercurio*, and also *RedEducom* which brings together "public and private organizations, civil society organizations, and individuals working on the subject of communication and education in Chile" (by Andrada, et al., p. 71). These are only a few of the many creative and innovative examples coming out of these Latin American contexts.

These contextualized stories are well worth the read, providing unique windows into the historical and current landscapes, people, and research endeavors in the field of media education. If nothing else, these chapters are a story of hope for media education in each of the countries presented. Despite the many challenges, state terror, dictatorships, and power struggles with media conglomerates that hinder media education, the voice of the people is seen to prevail. The editors recognize the lacunae in their accounts and recommend that future publications continue to fill in the gaps.

The second part of the book shares critical essays by scholars of *educommunicación* in Latin America. The chapters in this second section explore the history of *educommunicación* (by de Oliveira Soares, p. 185), conceptualizations of new literacy (by Morduchowicz, p. 200), constructivist television (by Fuenzalida, p. 211), media literacy (by Orozco Gómez & Corona Rodríguez, p. 225), criticality in ideology and praxis (by Ferres, p. 240), transmedia and participatory cultures (by Scolari, p. 248), and the missing link between media literacy and *educommunicación* (by Hoechsmann, p. 259).

Defining *educommunicación* is essential to understanding Latin American media education. Hoechsmann states that *educommunicación* is a "sub

domain of theory and practice that intersects between Media Studies, Journalism and Communications, on the one hand, and Education on the other" (by Hoechsmann, p. 264), and, drawing from Omar Rincón, that in Latin America, communication is "more about mediations than media, more about processes than objects" and that the "processes and practices of people's lived experiences with media form the backdrop to communication work" (by Hoeschsmann, p. 261). Hoechsmann (2020) elaborates by exploring the origins and differences in the understanding of 'popular culture' from a Latin American perspective. The uniquely Latin American concept of *educommunicación* falls under the broader paradigm of communication for social change with socio-political praxis at its core, drawing on community-based practices that engage citizen participation within an orientation toward transforming communities and people's lives (by Barbas, 2020). With this in mind, it is easier to see how the country-specific accounts in Part One contextualize *educommunicación* in social and political change, media related legislation, and educational initiatives. Understanding this framing is essential when reading Part Two where the critical essays provide a unique insight into the interplay between literacies, media practices and social and political change in Latin America.

This book can be read from cover to cover to gain a full picture, but reading individual chapters based on topics of interest is also possible. I would recommend starting with chapters one *The state of media education in Latin America* (by Mateus et al., 2020), thirteen *Educommunication landmarks in Latin America* (Soares, 2020), and nineteen *Tan lejos pero tan cerca: The missing link between media literacy and educommunicación* (by Hoechsmann, 2020), as these authors present essential conceptual frameworks, key terms and histories that are helpful when reading other chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the book, provides the framework for the chapters in part one, and applies this framework as a general introduction to Latin American contexts. Chapter 19 provides insights into historical, definitional and conceptual elements unique within Latin American *educommunicación* and media education in order to open discourses about democratization, power, cultural exchange and transnationalization (by Hoechsmann, 2020). In Chapter 13, Ismar de Oliveira Soares (2020) honours the fifty-year history of a "beautiful story of innovation born in Latin America" (p. 197) by examining communication from the perspectives of cultural resistance, social development, and cultural studies. This frames the

historical influences in Latin American media education in the areas of research, networking, and international connections and highlights the influence of the Latin American publication *Comunicar* as a "relevant international place for a cultural perspective and dissemination of media education practices" (by de Oliviera Soares, p. 189).

This book sets out to augment global discourses about media literacy education by providing a unique perspective to Latin American histories and contexts. The plurality of accounts is important as this is not a singular story, despite the shared legacy of the term *educommunicación*. Thus, the book not only provides an essential window into contexts heretofore closed by the language barrier to Anglo speaking media educators and researchers, but also a space for dialogue within and between Latin American scholars and educators, in the areas of media, literacy and education research and practice. This book is an essential text for all who are interested in engaging in a global dialogue in the fields of literacy, *educommunicación* and media education.

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