

Distance Education in Latin America (Volume I and II) Colloquium Series

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International conferences and seminars focused on distance education in Latin American and Caribbean countries have served as a setting for the presentation and discussion of experiences developed during a decade and, also, to show the level of development reached by the theoretical and conceptual reflection in this field. The systematic compilation and publication in book format of reflections and contributions coming from different practical perspectives of distance education, constitute an essential way of facilitating the permanence of this exchange of experiences and initiate a continuing dialogue between men and women who dedicate themselves to offering this education service in the region.

The two volumes that compose this important compilation of reports and working papers presented during the II Latin American Conference on Distance Education held in Caracas in May of 1986 actually constitute a required reference work for approaching distance education in this part of the world. This conference, which brought together specialists from Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela (with special guests from Suriname, Spain, and Germany), gathered the different and sometimes divergent methodological approaches that, using this teaching-learning approach, attempt to answer the educational needs of important sectors of the population excluded from the conventional educational systems.

The work is composed of two volumes, six parts, and a total of thirty chapters, each consisting of a working paper. For each part the editor produced an introduction; in the same way, each chapter is preceded by a summary and is complemented by the corresponding report of discussion. Volume I gathers fourteen works and volume II, sixteen; both volumes

include the author index and the table of contents of both volumes. The main subjects by which the editor organized the papers are the following: *General Aspects* (constitutes a general overview of the elements that explain the development of distance education in the region); *Teaching and Curriculum* (includes methodological and operational aspects of teaching and curriculum design); *Ways of Learning* (presents the debates about three instructional means: written, auditory, and audiovisual); *Teaching Evaluation* (considers the evaluation of the courses, the logistics and operational aspects, performance, and some methodological problems of the summary evaluation of students' performance); *Program Evaluation* (establishes theoretical-conceptual elements that orient the evaluation of programs or systems that work in this modality); *Presentation of Experiences* (gathers the presentation of cases of:

Colombia-Colombian Institute for the encouragement of higher education and the Quindio University; Ecuador-Open University of Loja; Spain-National University of Distance Education and Ibero-American Office of Education; and Venezuela-Open National University, Simon Rodriguez University, Simon Bolivar University and other experiences in rural education and partly observed systems).

Considering that higher education at a distance makes possible "taking the university to the students an alternative to the old and legitimate aspiration of taking the student to the university," as the editor says in the preface, he selected for this publication the works most representative of the different viewpoints, from which this educational modality has been put to work in the region: the theoretical and cultural considerations for the establishment of distance education in this part of the world, the "how" and "to whom" these projects and their evaluation are addressed, and the presentation and analysis of concrete experiences. The value of this edition of *La Educación a Distancia en América Latina* rests in its classification and compilation of the works and, especially, in its significance as a mechanism for the diffusion of current practices in this field in the region.