

Review

A Review of “Fonoaudiología: ¿Comunicación para el desarrollo humano? La experiencia social y comunitaria de la Universidad del Valle”

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Title: *Fonoaudiología: ¿Comunicación para el desarrollo humano? La experiencia social y comunitaria de la Universidad del Valle*

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Diverse voices have emerged in Latin America, at different times in history and from different spaces, that have critically questioned the professional work of speech-language therapy

(Calixto et al., 2013; Fuks, 2012; Ithurralde et al., 2019; Satizabal Reyes & Aguilar Arias, 2020). This is because, despite the Latin American territory’s reality, marked by deep economic and social injustices –consequences of colonialism– a cultural and linguistic diversity often not recognized by its states, and systematic violations of human rights (Escobar et al., 2020), speech-language therapy has shown a tendency towards reductionist practices, following epistemic frameworks from other types of societies to understand and intervene human communication (Cuervo Echeverri, 1998; Muñoz-Lizana & Peñaloza Castillo, 2020). Consequently, its scope of action has been limited to the evaluation, diagnosis, and intervention of communication disorders according to their categorization by area (language, speech, hearing, voice), together with swallowing, oral motor, and vestibular difficulties. In this context, *Fonoaudiología: ¿Comunicación para el desarrollo humano? La experiencia social y comunitaria de la Universidad del Valle*, a book edited and issued by the publishing program of Universidad del Valle (2020), proposes counter-hegemonic alternatives to manage university-level training, promoting reflections on core aspects of speech-language therapy –as a discipline and a profession– that are relevant to the social and sociosanitary issues of the region. This has the aim to contribute to empowerment, democracy, and human development.

The authors of this work are speech-language therapists Andrea Aguilar Arias and Jenny Natalia Torres Zambrano, both of whom have a vast academic and professional experience in areas related to community health, public health, inclusive education, and socio-community development from critical perspectives. The book is based on the second author’s research project for the Master of Human Development of *Facultad Latinoamericana de*

Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO, Argentina), which explores the experience of the speech-language therapy internship at Universidad del Valle between 2014-2016, in districts 18 and 20 of Santiago de Cali, Colombia. Through this work, the authors propose discussing other ways of understanding and re-signifying the profession, to respond to the social struggles of different populations, especially those who are most excluded within the Latin American political and social scenario.

In Chapter 1, entitled *Herramientas teóricas*, the authors present the research and theoretical background for the main issue addressed in the book. In the first and second sections, they introduce some background information regarding research in speech therapy in Latin America, which is characterized by a clinical, individualized, pathologizing, and normalizing approach and is centered around the so-called communication disorders. This is amplified by the regulatory framework that governs the professional and academic practice of speech therapy in Latin American countries, particularly in Colombia, where the discipline leans towards habilitation and rehabilitation; this hinders the possibility to carry out practices related to health promotion, prevention, and participation. The authors believe that responding to the above would require broadening the contexts in which research is carried out, aiming at the inclusion of social and community environments that shape human communication and the health of the population. This would be part of a necessary ontological, epistemic, methodological, and ethical-political restructuring of speech-language therapy.

In the third section of this chapter, the authors invite us to situate speech therapy practices in the framework of human development studies, as a theoretical proposal that generates reflections that, in turn, allow us to rethink the discipline's object of study. To this end, they attempt to integrate the theories, concepts, and approaches of relevant international authors such as philosopher and economist Amartya Sen, with his theory on justice, development, and human capabilities; philosopher Martha Nussbaum and her notion of human dignity; Didier Fassin with his critique of social participation in healthcare; and Jaime Breilh's proposal on the social determinants of health. This results in an innovative intellectual exercise that links the phenomenon of communication with theories extracted from the social sciences, humanities, and collective health, and undertakes the challenge of understanding communicative health within the framework of human development, with a focus on human rights, equity, and social justice.

Lastly, the authors express the importance of making the experience of the community speech therapy internship at

Universidad del Valle visible, in order to encourage reflection on the complex, dynamic, and often contradictory relationship between academia and communities, between territorial needs and the objectives of professional training, and between the historical, social, and political events and research. In this context, the authors urge us to reclaim the enriching and transformative character of academia, in order to develop appropriate tools with the community's participation and the different functions of the university (training, extension, and research).

Chapter 2, entitled *El horizonte de esta investigación*, is a methodological section that describes the general and specific objectives of the research supporting the book, together with the nature of the study, the data collection techniques, and the type of analysis used. Following a qualitative case study methodology, the authors propose to systematize the experience of the community-based speech therapy internship at Universidad del Valle (Cali, Colombia). This internship is selected due to its exceptional combination of intersectoral, interinstitutional, and transdisciplinary actions in districts 18 and 20 of Santiago de Cali, between 2014 and 2016. The data collection techniques are document analysis, focus groups with graduates and teachers, and in-depth interviews with administrative and community actors.

The 3rd chapter of the book, entitled *Modelo de gestión: la experiencia de la Universidad del Valle*, is one of the most important ones since in it the authors present the results of the internship systematization. First, they offer a historical reconstruction of the internship, which started in 1987 and was significantly inspired by Alma-Ata's principles of universalization of Primary Health Care. Subsequently, they address the objectives, both pedagogical and related to the management of social projects within the internship. Thirdly, the authors present the principles that guide the practice in this area, which show a strong social participation component. Next, they describe the actors participating in this process and their roles, along with providing a series of relevant and varied strategies, instruments, and mechanisms for implementing professional internships and community projects. Additionally, they collect the perception of the participants (community agents, teachers, graduates, and administrators) of the development of new abilities, creation of opportunities, operational aspects, barriers, and setbacks encountered during the experience. Finally, the authors describe the concepts and actions of speech-language therapy within this community-based internship.

In the following chapter, entitled *Nuevas perspectivas para la formación en fonoaudiología y salud*, the authors delve into the proposals for training that emerge from the theoretical

frameworks and results described in chapters 1 and 3, respectively. Referencing Paulo Freire and community psychologist Víctor Martínez, the authors mention that the internship experience allows for an articulation between academic and social management to happen, thus offering a scenario in which proposals for diverse and participative actions converge. Furthermore, they suggest that speech therapy internships should show an ethical and political commitment to the communities they work with and follow an interdisciplinary and intersectoral approach with strong community participation, in order to establish open communication between academic, institutional, and popular sectors. This, in turn, would allow us to democratize knowledge and strengthen the social fabric.

The authors conclude with reflections and recommendations, mentioning that the systematization of the experience allowed new possibilities to unfold regarding the foundations and actions of speech therapy. It is proposed that speech therapy should not be limited to techniques or procedures shaped by the biomedical model, but instead should expand its scope of action toward theoretical and practical proposals that enhance social participation. Universidad del Valle's model for pedagogical and social management with a community-based approach may be one of the paths to follow if we wish to build a discipline of speech therapy that recognizes and addresses social contexts and offers adequate, timely, and consensual interventions that adjust to individuals and communities, to contribute to collective development.

Undoubtedly, this book is a substantial contribution to the process of deconstruction and reconstruction of speech-language therapy in Latin America, by including critical perspectives that consider its social dimensions. Each chapter is a gateway to deep reflections on the fundamental elements of the profession, how its object of study is conceived, and the diverse methodologies used to tackle the issues of communities from the perspective of human communication. This work should be a compulsory reading for anyone who wishes to be introduced to community-based speech therapy, since it includes theoretical and methodological elements that allow to operationalize this area of work. At the same time, it is highly recommended for students, professionals, and academics

who are working in different territories with a community-based approach, as it allows contrasting experiences, broadening reflections, and shaping the work according to the pedagogical and social management proposals that arise from the experience at Universidad del Valle.

For all the reasons described above, I thank and congratulate the authors for their dedication and generous contribution to speech-language therapy in Latin America. I hope that this is only one of many contributions that Universidad del Valle offers to other schools in this region and the world.

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