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.