Education in Cuba

Christy Youngs-Colon

St. John Fisher College

Follow this and additional works at: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/intlstudies_masters

**How has open access to Fisher Digital Publications benefited you?**

**Recommended Citation**

Please note that the Recommended Citation provides general citation information and may not be appropriate for your discipline. To receive help in creating a citation based on your discipline, please visit http://libguides.sjfc.edu/citations.

This document is posted at https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/intlstudies_masters/8 and is brought to you for free and open access by Fisher Digital Publications at St. John Fisher College. For more information, please contact fisherpub@sjfc.edu.
Education in Cuba

Abstract
The intention of this paper is to evaluate educational system in Cuba under the leaders of the Cuban Revolution. The argument asserts that much improvement has been made to the Cuban education system since 1959, especially with respect to quantitative measures: the literacy rate, the student-teacher ratio, access to education, student enrollment, and the highest level of education attained. The qualitative measures of the Cuban educational system also show improvement: the quality of instruction and the democracy of education have improved. But there are areas in need of improvement: political content and academic/intellectual freedom. Much of the outcome, both positive and negative, can be attributed to the main goals of the Cuban Revolution: increase in literacy, integration of formal education with employment needs, and to create a "new socialist man."

Document Type
Thesis

Degree Name
M.S. in International Studies

Department
International Studies
St. John Fisher College

Education in Cuba

A Master's Thesis submitted to

The Faculty of the Master's of Science in International Studies Program

In Candidacy for the Degree of

Master's of Science in International Studies

By

Christy Youngs-Colón

Dr. Richard S. Hillman, Advisor

Dr. John Roche, Second Reader

Dr. John Roche, Acting Program Director

Rochester, NY, the United States of America

August 2005
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Conditions of the Cuban Education System before the Revolution</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 The Anti-Colonial Period (1879-1889)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 U.S. Military Occupation and Political/Economic Domination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1898-1903 and 1908-1933)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 &quot;The Quasi-Republic&quot; (1933-1959)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cuban Revolution and its goals</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Economic Aspects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Political Aspects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Social Aspects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Educational Reforms</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Evaluation of the Educational Reforms</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Quantitative Results</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Qualitative Results</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Conclusion</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I Teacher Survey Objectives, Research Questions, and Hypotheses</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix II Student Survey Objectives, Research Questions, and Hypotheses</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix III Teacher Survey</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix IV Student Survey</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

The intention of this paper is to evaluate educational system in Cuba under the leaders of the Cuban Revolution. The argument asserts that much improvement has been made to the Cuban education system since 1959, especially with respect to quantitative measures: the literacy rate, the student-teacher ratio, access to education, student enrolment, and the highest level of education attained. The qualitative measures of the Cuban educational system also show improvement: the quality of instruction and the democracy of education have improved. But there are areas in need of improvement: political content and academic/ intellectual freedom. Much of the outcome, both positive and negative, can be attributed to the main goals of the Cuban Revolution: increase in literacy, integration of formal education with employment needs, and to create a “new socialist man.”
1. Introduction

Cubans leaders and Cubans alike are proud of two main systems within Cuba: healthcare and education. Cuba is recognized by the international community for them. I will discuss the latter of the two systems. The topic, “Education in Cuba,” is important to Cubans, but also to the international community. As the world becomes more interconnected, what happens at one end of the globe is often felt at the other end. A good educational system can benefit one’s own country as well as the rest of the world. What can be learned from the Cuban educational system, both the positive aspects and the negative aspects, can contribute to improved education at home.

Many scholars give credit to the headway made in the Cuban educational system since 1959, although none of the critiques completely dismiss negative aspects. Ronald Lindahl recognizes the many positive aspects of the Cuban educational system as well as some of the challenges it faces.¹ He compares it with that of the United States, arguing that they are two similar educational systems. Sergio Díaz-Briquets argues that the Cuban educational system is “out of tune” with the needs of the modern world. He says, “while quantitative indicators suggest significant progress, the evidence regarding educational quality is far more questionable.”² Christopher Worthman and Lourdes Kaplan argue that while Fidel Castro maintains that all Cubans are entitled to a free education, in actuality it is not free at all. “Along with literacy comes indoctrination.”³

³ Lourdes Kaplan and Christopher Worthman, “Literacy Education and Dialogical Exchange: Impressions of Cuban Education in One Classroom,” The Reading Teacher, no. 7 (April 2001): 656.
They also argue that the education in Cuba does not foster the ability to challenge the status quo nor to problem solve for everyday challenges.

I find some of the field study and research done on education in Cuba puzzling regarding the qualitative measures because in many cases evidence is conflicting or nonexistent. For example, on one hand some authors argue that Cuban education does not prepare Cubans for "real life" or the "real world," while other scholars discuss how Cuban education prepares students to become up standing citizens and how knowledge is put into practice because school is linked to work. When discussing the quality of instruction, some scholars assert that Cuban education is individualist, which does not enhance social skills, whereas other research demonstrates that in fact Cuban students are very team oriented and are frequently placed in groups; hence, fostering the acquisition of social skills. The two examples previously mentioned are just a few of the many discrepancies that can be found in the studies that have been done regarding qualitative aspects of education in Cuba. I have not been able to find a comprehensive study of the educational system in Cuba. What is undeniable is the headway that has been made in regards to quantitative measures of education. However, the question is whether or not the qualitative failures outweigh the quantitative successes.

In my research, I answer a few important questions: what was the education like at the start of the Cuban Revolution? What were the goals of the Revolution to reform education? Were the goals met? How has the education in Cuba changed due to the revolutionary reforms carried out? I also evaluate the current education system both in terms of quantitative and qualitative measures. Finally, I make suggestions as to those
aspects of the Cuban education system that might be of value to the international community as well point out areas that need improvement and should be avoided.

I support my thesis by evaluating the Cuban education using a combination of statistics, scholarship and academic observations, personal observations and interviews with Cuban and American teachers and students, as well as comparing the Cuban education system with pre-Cuban Revolutionary education and with education systems of other countries, mainly those of Latin America and the Caribbean, however not exclusively.

The evaluation of the Cuban education system was conducted using an accumulation of information regarding quantitative and qualitative measures of education. Quantitative statistics were gathered mainly from the UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, the Ministry of Education in Cuba, and the World Bank. Variables include: literacy rate, student-teacher ratio, student enrollment, access to education, and highest level of education obtained. Qualitative information will be gathered from the scholarship and academic observations and personal observations and interviews. The surveys conducted are not necessarily statistically significant; however, they allow us to see trends.

Qualitative variables include: quality of instruction (critical thinking, special education, collaborative versus individualized work, technology, and student versus teacher-centered learning), academic/intellectual freedom, political content, and democracy within the classroom.

The Cuban Revolution has made progress in improving education in Cuba. Cuba has increased its literacy rate, brought education to the rural areas, and increased school
enrollments among other quantitative improvements. Also, comparing Cuba’s educational system to that of other Latin American and Caribbean countries, and even to most industrialized countries for that matter, it competes very well. However, that is not to say that problems do not exist in the educational system. Limitations can be found in the areas of academic/intellectual freedom and political content in education.

I hope to provide a detailed, systematic analysis that includes both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the revolutionary educational system in Cuba.

Since the Cuban Revolution is an ongoing process, the results must be considered tentative and subject to continued evolution.
2. Conditions of the Cuban Education System before Revolution

During Spanish colonial rule, plans for educational development existed in Cuba. Early on in the Spanish rule of Cuba, there were many educational institutions funded by private donations. The elite sent their children abroad or to private schools; and the poor were untouched by a formal education. Also, the children of rural regions did not have access to education. The masses of poor people definitely outnumbered the rich. Unfortunately the poor population could not afford to attend the schools. In 1793, the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País established two free secular schools in Havana. Furthermore, it established many more schools throughout Cuba. By 1817, there were 90 schools supported by voluntary contributions. For some, these schools allowed free education for some of the poor, including black children. Some schools for the black population were also established, but attendance was not enforced and therefore, was infrequent. The large population that attended the new schools was most often children of aristocracy. This impact was negligible on the general population.

During the nineteenth century, 1842-1898, many laws to improve education were put into place. Unfortunately, the laws did not go far enough to improve social inequalities. Free schooling was limited to the lower primary grades. It was nearly impossible for the poor, including the black population, to rise above their socioeconomic status with only a primary level of education. Although provisions for educating black children were established, children of different racial backgrounds were to attend separate schools in almost all cases. In the schools that the black and poor children attended, a religious and moral curriculum was instilled. They would not learn the practical skills

---

necessary to advance, making it yet again impossible for these children to rise above their socioeconomic status.

Although the Catholic Church and the public school system had no nominal connection, the church had much influence on educational matters. The church provided much of the education on the island. For instance, provisions permitted the church to have a parish priest give instruction in the primary schools once a week and nothing could prevent this from happening. The law also maintained that the church would decide on public school curriculum and materials. Children of different sexes were to attend separate public schools. This separation of students would serve to develop the gender roles of the poor population in order to serve the needs of the elite in the future. 5

About one-half of the schools on the island were parochial schools. The schools supported by the church had much better facilities than those of the public schools. Colonial officials ran public schools. Not enough schools, personnel, or materials existed. Public schools often rented houses or buildings for their classrooms. All teachers of public schools had to be Spaniards of “good conduct and religious moral character” except for instructors in music or language. Many teachers were deprived of teaching positions for political and personal reasons. Not enough teachers were available, leaving the majority of Cuban children without education. 6

Although the Spanish colonists had good intentions with regard to improving the education in Cuba, unfortunately, the efforts did not go far enough for all Cubans, instead meeting only the needs of the Spanish colonists. The Cuban majority, despite their hope for social advancement, remained with little education and the gap between the rich and

---

5 Ibid., p. 263.
6 Ibid., p. 264.
the poor grew further yet. The reform efforts under Spanish rule did not do very much to improve conditions for the majority of the Cuban people.

The majority of the Cuban population grew tired of the few rich controlling the poor masses. The imbalance in the educational system eventually led to a revolution by university students under José Martí, poet and patriot. They demanded, along with liberation from Spain, an educational system with more practical, utilitarian instruction instead of on classical studies. Martí led students in the forefront of the independence movement against Spanish colonial rule. Although United States military involvement was feared by Martí and his followers, Spanish rule came to an end after the American military succeeded in the Spanish-American War. Educational reform in Cuba continued.

After the war in 1898, the results of Spanish rule left Cuba’s school system with many deficiencies. 1/10 of the Cuban population perished due to the Spanish-American War. Only ½ the schools once opened were open in 1898. The literacy rate among the adult population in Cuba was 40%. 88% of the literate people were Spanish residents. 2/3 of the literate population lived in urban regions, leaving the rural population clearly at a disadvantage. Only 16% of school-age children (aged 5-17) attended school. The attendance percentage for the students attending school was 33% in urban regions and 12% in rural regions. 1/121 persons had been to a university and 1/2627 of the black population had been to a university. The schools that were in existence and functioning lacked the necessary materials. The students were not grouped by grade or any other method of classification. The curriculum was based on classical and scientific studies usually of the rote form. The American army felt very strongly about educating the

7 Ibid., p. 194
Cubans. In the eyes of the Americans, education would be important in preparing Cuba to govern itself.

The American General Wood began with full-force to reform the educational system of Cuba. He believed that education would help to cleanse the minds of the Cubans. The United States tutelage would be helpful in preparing the Cubans to govern themselves. He modeled the educational system after an American public school from the state of Ohio. The government sent Cuban teachers for training in the United States, and United States educators came to Cuba to design and teach in the new educational system. Spanish translation of U.S. textbooks introduced U.S. beliefs and practices to Cuban students and parents. Access to free public education was available to all socioeconomic sectors. A system of primary schools was created; secondary and vocational instruction was reorganized with the addition of schools for engineers and architects. Utilitarian skills were being taught instead of rote memorization and drill work. Wood also separated church teachings and authority from the new public education.

In 1900, General Leonard Wood spent 2.68 million pesos on education. It is estimated that he spent five times the amount that the Ministry of Education spent on education under the Spanish rule, and more than any other Latin American country. Enrollment quintupled to 40% in public schools. Cuba enrolled a higher percentage of the school-age population in its primary schools than any other Spanish-speaking republic. The rate of attendance reached a high of 76%. The black population had access to an education. The educational gap between the rural and urban areas also narrowed. Finally, although religious and private schools still existed, they played a more limited

---

role in education. The majority of the population supported public education. Cubans placed great faith in the power of education. Communities built their own schools with donated supplies and labor. Unfortunately, not all the goals of the educational reform were achieved. Although much improvement occurred, it did not continue.

Many criticized Wood's reforms in that he forced too radical a change on a society not yet ready for it. He assumed that after educating the Cuban society, it would be ready for self-governance. Many teachers were Spaniards who had renounced their citizenship. The problem was that although the teachers were American-trained, they still held traditional beliefs that were portrayed in their teachings. They had ignored the new American methodology and implemented training in hierarchical patterns of authority. Wood also allowed local boards to have governing power over public schools. Instead of administrator and instructor positions given due to professional qualifications, many positions were gained due to personal connections. In the beginning there was a drastic increase in improvements but there was no national support to continue improvements. It was as if the United States gave Cuba the tools necessary for educational improvement but did not train its administrators sufficiently. After all, Cuban society had been socialized for centuries by Spanish rule. The system functioned with much bribery. Wood overestimated the degree to which Cuban officials would work together democratically.  

The reforms brought by the United States did not last. Democratic ways could not be instilled in Cuba nor could it keep from slipping back into its traditional ways. From 1900 to 1919, a period of almost twenty years, the literacy rate increased only from

---

57% to 62%.\(^{10}\) Over half the school children in Cuba were concentrated below the third grade. In the 1920s public schools faced low enrollment, lower attendance, shortage of schools and teachers, poor hygiene in schools, few students completing primary education, and corruption in public administration.

Graduate students of universities remained unemployed because their area of study would not fulfill the nation's needs. Feuding occurred between those who saw the U.S. educational system as the model to follow and those who recognized the negative effects of U.S. influence. Many parents grew tired of the dysfunctional public educational system. As a result, many private institutions were built. Others sent their children to U.S. conducted schools in hopes that their child would be chosen for future schooling by the United States. Intensified racism and class divisions grew in Cuba. Nationalists and Educators feared that separation of classes would prevent future national development in Cuba. They believed that there needed to be a love of patria, Cubanidad. Some of these critics blamed private schools for denationalization. Cuba, without an improved educational system, would not bring social and economic development.

A dictator, Juan Batista, ruled Cuba from 1933 into the next three decades. He worked with the support of the United States as well as with a shared idealism, initially. His reign of power would not improve conditions in Cuba. The Minister of Education became one of the richest men in Cuba at the expense of the education budget. Cuban teachers held life tenure whether or not they taught. Positions could be bought and sold, and many positions were filled with untrained and unqualified teachers. The gap opened up further between the rural region and the modern urban region.

\(^{10}\) Ibid., p. 135.
Batista engaged in a very radical and controversial educational reform. In 1936, he militarized the rural educational system. The program was known as the “civic-military rural education.” He thought that if he targeted the rural community, where much communism flourished, he could educate and instill his ideals in those with opposing beliefs. Sergeants in the army took over rural teachings. Many instructors were not qualified to teach. The army of instructors reported not to the Department of Education but to the army command. The army created new educational programs, along with new schools, and textbooks.\textsuperscript{11}

The Cuban population somewhat supported Juan Batista’s new educational program at first. It was more accepted because it was specifically for the rural population, which needed the most educational improvement. But people began to lose faith in his program and fear his army when his army grew to three times its original size. What effect did this program have on educational conditions in Cuba? Ten years later, the quality of rural education had not improved. However, for Batista, the program did facilitate his bid for presidency.

By 1950 the enrollment population of school age children was only 34% in rural areas as opposed to 65% in urban areas. 71% of the classrooms were in Cuba’s urban regions while having only half of the population of school aged students. Only 10% of students were enrolled in post primary schools, of which almost none were from the rural population. Finally, private institutions increased their role. They educated 7% of the population in 1925 and 14% in 1958.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p.140
\textsuperscript{12} Truslow, 1951, pp.419-413 as cited in Epstein, 1988.
The “Quasi-Republic” educational reform era resulted in a large gap in educational opportunities for the different social classes. Educational reform failed yet once again, leaving many goals unattained.
3. The Cuban Revolution and its goals

Although many leaders of other Latin American countries felt that education was for the improvement in the status of individuals and would give them more power, Castro had different sentiments on the subject. He was quoted as saying: “Education is an index of political oppression, social backwardness, and exploitation. The indexes of economic backwardness coincide exactly with the indexes of illiteracy and the lack of schools and universities. Countries that are most exploited economically and possessed politically are the countries that have the most illiterates…” Castro insisted that educating the Cuban population would be the means by which the goals of the revolution could be met.

Coming to power in 1958, Castro and his revolutionaries were left with one million illiterates, over one million near illiterates, 600,000 children without schools, and 10,000 teachers without jobs. Although fifty percent of the population lived in rural areas, only one-third of its population was enrolled in rural schools. There was also a decline in enrollment in primary schools. Out of those enrolled in the university, one-third were enrolled in social science and law so that after graduation they would obtain service jobs as intermediaries between the U.S. technicians and businessmen and the Cuban people. An unequal educational system existed in which rural education was particularly underdeveloped. Finally, the impact of centuries of unequal distribution of income and wealth still existed in Cuba. However, the revolutionary leaders inherited a relatively well-educated population by the standards of the typical Latin American dependent capitalist economy.

The first goal of Castro and his revolutionaries was to incorporate everyone into the Revolutionary project. Through education, Castro would construct the “New Socialist Person.” He wanted to mobilize the entire Cuban population into productive activities and transform the ideological base on which these productive activities functioned. The nation would change from individualists to collectivists. He wanted to bring literacy to rural workers and also deepen the understanding of national problems to develop a new concept of citizenship, and foster a new willingness to work.

The second goal of Fidel Castro and other revolutionary leaders was to expand the formal school system with an initial emphasis on primary and secondary education. A major emphasis would be on reaching the children in the rural areas. Fidel felt that the youth were uncorrupted and pure enough to be formed into true communists. Through the instruction in the new educational system, the new ideology could also be passed onto the students. From there, the students could bring the socialist ideas home to their parents.

Thirdly, Castro wanted to integrate formal education with employment needs, as determined by the socialist view of work. An emphasis would be put on relating school to work and then ultimately combining school and workplaces. Cuba needed more highly skilled labor in both rural and urban areas in order to achieve economic improvement and to develop particular skills for the overall shift in the economy toward technical self-sufficiency. Castro wanted to industrialize the nation, and to move it from a distorted capitalist economy to a centrally planned socialist state.

Cuban schools were to become more relevant to life. Throughout the history of Cuba, the church has always had a major influence on the teachings of the public
educational system. Castro had a different idea in mind. Church and state would be separated. Educational theory was to be tied to practice, and instruction was to be intimately related to production and work. Later, emphasis shifted to higher education and adult education. The revolutionaries would try to produce more university graduates in the science and engineering fields to help lead the socialist state to self-sufficiency and economic growth.

Eastern European countries aided Cuba in the revision of its educational system but the schools would not imitate those of the assisting countries. By 1961, Castro had three specific educational goals that he wanted to put into place: six years of compulsory primary instruction; basic secondary education available to all who complete primary instruction; and, intermediate vocational or technical instruction available to meet the economic needs of Cuba.\textsuperscript{15}

By the start of the revolution in Cuba, Fidel Castro and many other revolutionaries had grown very tired of the educational inequalities that had been for so long a characteristic of Cuba. They had much hope that with a new leader in charge and new ideology, the educational system would improve. With their goals in mind, they began to implement the revolutionary educational reforms.

\textsuperscript{15} Epstein, "Cuba."
4. Educational Reforms

One of the revolutionary demands of Fidel Castro was that Cuban schools were to become more relevant to life, educational theory was to be tied to practice, and instruction was to be intimately related to production and work. The first structural change Castro made in reforming education took place in 1959 when Cuba replaced the heavily centralized educational authority with the new Ministry of Education, which decentralized administration but centralized curriculum guidance and control. Also following many years of effort to eradicate private schools, in 1961, all Cuban schools were nationalized. With these new grounds, Castro implemented one educational reform after another in order to meet the educational goals of the revolution.

In the rural regions of Cuba there existed a huge population of illiterate adults. Before 1959 it was estimated that 11.6% of the urban population and 41.7% of the rural population were illiterate. The UNESCO Statistical Yearbook reported in 1959 that Cuba ranked fourth in illiteracy in Latin America, with 24% of the total population illiterate. In an effort to eliminate illiteracy, the Ministry of Education was given the responsibility for the integration and organization of a literacy campaign.

In 1957, while Fidel Castro was in the Sierra Maestra Mountains, he developed the pedagogy for the Campaign Against Illiteracy. Soldiers who had a primary education spent their free time instructing peasant and their children. In Havana, numerous groups of political activists called Avanzadas Revolucionarias gave evening and weekend instruction. The campaign also envisioned secondary school students from middle class families teaching to the illiterate rural population. Castro targeted the youths not just because of personnel shortages, but because he thought they were pure and uncorrupted

---

enough to be formed into true communists. He also wanted to capture those who were planning to leave Cuba. The youths responded to Castro’s challenge to create an exciting literacy adventure. The urban youths formed the corps of the first “army of education.”

The urban youths were trained at Varadero Beach. Approximately 105,700 young people were trained and indoctrinated. They went through seven intense days of training in the use of Venceremos and Alfabeticos (we will defeat, and read and write). On Mother’s Day of 1961, Castro delivered a moving speech to the parents and into the countryside. 17 A census was taken to identify all illiterates, with whom the youths resided while undergoing the campaign.

Living conditions in the countryside were usually very primitive and often unsanitary. Most of the urban youths had never lived without electricity and running water. Most of the young people involved in the campaign had to sleep on a hammock or a dirt floor and to bathe themselves in the river. The youths were also involved in the daily chores of the families with whom they were living. The daily farm work prior to the evening instruction exhausted most of the youths. These youths were not communists; they were just responding to a challenge of revolutionary nationalism. The program lasted six months.

After primary schools closed for the summer break, nearly 1,000 teachers also joined the campaign. Some served as brigade leaders, or overseers of the literacy work in factories and municipal areas. The Campaign Against Illiteracy was the first time that men and women had equal roles in bringing about social change.

In the fall of 1962, Castro ordered schools to participate in a mandatory September through January additional literacy campaign period in order to continue the initial “thrust.” Most Cuban schools remained closed during this period of the fall session. Including the summer break, the campaign now would total eight months. During the time that the parents were being schooled, army brigades were brought in and established in order to occupy the time of the children. The children planted flowers, learned national songs, and visited museums and factories. The three months of cancelled school was not looked at as too great a sacrifice in the final push of the literacy campaign. In December of 1962, a mass graduation was held and took place nationwide. Literacy follow-ups came in the form of revolutionary instruction at weekly neighborhood meetings or seminars in which government programs were explained and the manual of the rebel army studied.  

Some problems existed in association with the Literacy Campaign. When the census was taken to identify the illiterate population, many were overlooked. Some teachers failed to show up for evening classes and pupils were often unwilling, or too tired, to learn at the end of a day’s work. Most of the new literates only had a first grade level in reading and writing and their new skill would be too low to be of use at work or at home. Finally, without further follow-up, the skills gained by the once illiterate population would be lost.

However, the Literacy Campaign was an important first step of many educational reforms yet to come. Nothing of this magnitude had ever been attempted in Cuba before. It goes to show that limited resource did not necessarily limit reform programs. The campaign also demonstrates the feasibility of mass mobilization.

---

18 Ibid., p. 131-147.
The Cuban Revolution of 1959 was identifiably the turning point in educational change in Cuba. The expansion that took place closely parallels the economic policy of that time. From the initial literacy thrust until 1964, basic education in rural primary schools was emphasized. This time period corresponds with the failed attempt to industrialize under the Soviet model. At the end of this period, the government viewed the school, also known as Escuela de Instrucción Revolucionaria or EIR (Schools of Revolutionary Instruction), as the change agent. New ideology could be channeled through the educational framework.

In 1964, a movement called “Schools to the Countryside” sought to increase agricultural production and to instill socialist values. The program was designed to give teenagers outlets for their creative drives and to make them feel like an integral part of society. Students and teachers worked side-by-side for 45 days of summer vacation to two years in the countryside as part of the new curriculum with the production of goods and the principle of collective endeavor. The program combined recreation, sports, physical education, and productive work, thus serving an educational end and fulfilling an economic need at a time when the planting and harvesting of sugar and coffee crops need manpower. But it has been found that the student labor could not produce nearly as much as the trained workers, managers and technicians could contribute. Although they failed to meet the sugar quotas, the manual labor and mental work combination continues to be an integral part of the Cuban Education Policy. In 1965, EIR moved into technological reform in education in the service of agricultural development. Some problems with the Schools of Revolutionary Instruction were that their students had a low educational level. Only one-fifth of their students had as much as a sixth grade

---

19 Ibid., p. 131-147.
education. Teaching technology to these students was difficult because the Soviet materials were for more sophisticated audiences with much more experience in the technology field. The low level of education of their students can be attributed to Castro's selection process that consciously favored those of lower social and consequently lower educational origin.

A positive element that came out of the sixties decade was the establishment of the first of a series of rural education and work centers in the mountains. In the 1967, the first mountain school was opened in the province of Pinar del Rio, housing over 350 students in several buildings. Although this school begins with the third grade and extends through the basic secondary school, the plan in the other centers is to start with the first grade.20

Throughout the 1970's an educational change was intended to help in the transition from an agricultural to an industrial base. The 70's decade moved toward academic excellence and competition in an effort to raise educational standards. Nonetheless, schools of this time period required students to be involved in work programs, twenty hours per week, as did the schools in the countryside.

Cuba has a "Single-Ladder educational system." It embraces the nursery, elementary, secondary, and the university levels. Compulsory education covers all six grades of the primary schools, but as of the late 1960's between 50,000 and 100,000

eligible children were not yet in attendance.\textsuperscript{21} Each year an enormous campaign is undertaken by various organizations to get all children enrolled in school and to secure perfect attendance throughout the year.

Cuba has day nurseries to care for children of working mothers, which accept children from the ages of forty-five days to six years old. The children are given breakfast, midmorning snack, lunch, and dinner. They are bathed and dressed and receive medical and dental care. Also each child receives an educational program. Although the day nursery program is very costly, fees have been abolished since 1967.

A spectacular phase of Cuba’s educational development has been the establishment of large “school cities.” One school city, Ana Betancourt presently houses more than 10,000 preprimary through secondary school scholarship girls drawn from the remote areas of Cuba. The Juventud Rebelde school city opened in 1968 on the Isle of Pines. There will ultimately be 10,000 students in a technology division and another 10,000 in an agriculture division. The departments will cover citiculture, hydraulics, soil conservation, and cattle raising.\textsuperscript{22}

Educational television extensively broadcasts programs for basic secondary and preuniversity schools. Subjects include geography, history, biology, physics, chemistry, English, Spanish, mathematics, and manual training. Each grade receives several televised seminars weekly. Programs are planned and directed by the Cuban Broadcasting Institute.

Higher education has remained a monopoly of the state serving state interests. All policy is centrally developed, implemented, and evaluated within a Marxist-Leninist

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 560-564
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p. 560-564.
“scientific” world-view. The rationale for higher education is to provide a communist education where study, work, sport, and military training combine. University students pay no fees or tuition, and they receive all books without a charge. Some twenty-five percent of the students receive scholarships to cover living expenses. Universities decreased in number from seven in the pre-Revolutionary period to three in the post revolutionary period. Faculty tenure ended and the number of professors increased dramatically. Instead of the pre-Revolutionary university preparing students for professional careers, the revolutionary university sought to prepare students for personnel needs in industrial engineering and agricultural sciences. The new vocational and applied emphasis at the university level sought to integrate science and technology in national development. A 1964 decree requires that each student entering a university have a trade or a skill; its purpose, in the words of the government, is to develop in the student a love of work, a new attitude toward life, and a respect for the working class. The state universities strongly encourage student involvement in Cuban society. For example, the school of medicine sends the students to rural areas for a month each year to assist experts from the Ministry of Public Health. Since 1975, the university has increasingly emphasized economic needs. Although Cuba is fairly small and central planning works well, bureaucratic inefficiency has always plagued its educational system. Attempts to educate planners and managers are producing a “new elite in the Old Hispanic tradition.”

Adult education has been undertaken by the Ministry of Education through radio and television courses, farmer faculties, and programs for the advancement of women.

---

These are organized as day or evening courses, concentrated and intensive sessions, correspondence lessons, and special retraining schools for workers who are unemployed due to technological change. Evening and day class sessions are held, either before or after normal working hours, in factories, sugar refineries, rural areas, and city blocks. Special programs exist for workers that give them an intensive basic and pre-university secondary school education in a five-semester period. Workers continue to receive their salaries while they study.

Since 1959 the program for training teachers has passed through many changes in organization and structure. Many times emergency programs have had to be instituted to replace teachers who have left the island as well as to fill positions in newly created schools. Under one such program, thousands of students and assistant teachers who have not yet completed their academic and professional education were employed as regular teachers. Another emergency scheme is the Teachers of the People Program in which pupils or working people with a sixth grade education are given more education in two semesters, four intensive courses. Then after they practice-teach for six weeks, they spend a week at a pedagogical institute. Recruits from Eastern Europe and from other Latin American countries have met much of the shortage of teachers for technical and vocational schools. The armed forces also train teachers. Members of the political department of the armed forces are known as soldier-teachers. Their aim is to raise the educational level of the other soldiers to the point where they can perform the many tasks required by the advanced technology of modern warfare. The soldier-teacher may obtain a primary or secondary school teaching certificate while he or she serves in the armed
forces by taking teacher-improvement courses in cooperation with the Ministry of Education.24

Many factors limited the monumental educational reform from reaching its full potential. Programs that expanded at rapid rates resulted in shortages of teachers. The departure of thousands of teachers after the revolution intensified the problem. The use of untrained volunteer teachers, as well as teachers who had pushed through training programs at rapid rates, undermined quality. After the Bay of Pigs invasion a textbook shortage reached critical proportions by 1966-1967, and technical training activities were severely hampered by the lack of access to United States book suppliers. In 1969, the Cuban Book Institute declared that the contents of books could not be regarded as private property and it proceeded to print cheap editions of copyrighted titles, producing about 1.5 million copies of works by leading authors from around the world, without payment of royalties.25 Later, Eastern European textbooks became widely available for scientific and technological studies. Yet another problem faced by the educational system is that student dropout remains a serious problem. Out of every 100 students who begin first grade, fewer than twenty graduate from primary school; only five of these twenty successfully complete the basic secondary school, and only one of the five actually finishes the preuniversity program.

Though Castro faced many obstacles in carrying out the revolutionary educational reforms, he produced undeniable gains in the Cuban educational system. Six years prior to the revolutionary takeover, Castro stated that an integral part of the creation of a new society would be the government’s reform of education. The great importance attributed

to education can be seen from the increase in the national budget from 72 million pesos in 1958 to more than 330 million pesos in late 1960’s.\textsuperscript{26} The government guarantees free education and makes grants where needed for room and board, clothes, books, and all school materials. In the late 1960’s more than 40,000 scholarships were awarded annually to students in the fifth through the twelfth grade.\textsuperscript{27} In the decade following 1959, the number of primary and secondary public schools doubled and the accessibility of education for the rural children improved greatly for the first time in Cuba’s history. The matriculation rates of students increased twofold at the primary level and threefold in secondary schools.\textsuperscript{28} By the late 1960’s it was estimated that only about 4% of the population was still illiterate. In addition, special provisions for preschool education and special education for the handicapped, along with school health services, evidenced significant gains. Over two million children and adults were annually enrolled in the primary schools, and one-fifth were attending programs of adult education. The rest were enrolled in technical or academic schools on the secondary or university level. By contrast, in the late 1950’s less than one million students were enrolled in Cuban schools.


\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p. 562.

5. Evaluation of the educational reforms

In evaluating the educational reforms of the Cuban revolution, one can look to two aspects, one quantitative and the other qualitative. The first method compares the performance of the pre-revolutionary educational system with that of the post-revolution, and then compares the educational system of Cuba with other nations. Comparing the educational goals of the revolution to its accomplishments or failures, we found that significant gains have been obtained in the quantitative results, whereas, most of the limitations, although few, fell in the qualitative realm.

In comparing the pre-revolutionary educational system with that of the post-revolution, some major quantitative indicators of the educational system are literacy, enrollments, and access to schooling. The statistics of these categories have dramatically all improved.

In 1958, Cuba had one million illiterates, over one million near illiterates, and 600,000 children without schools. UNESCO estimated that in 1959 11.6% of urban population and 41.7% of the rural population was illiterate.\textsuperscript{29} Only one-third of the school-aged population living in the rural areas was enrolled in schools. Overall, less than one million students were enrolled in Cuban schools.

Castro and his revolution employed many reform programs to improve the educational system in Cuba. The first of many reforms to fight illiteracy was the Campaign Against Illiteracy, previously mentioned. Each year, a campaign was undertaken to enroll all school-aged children in school and to secure perfect attendance throughout the year. Rural primary schools also played a larger role in the Cuban

educational system. During the 1960's, many rural education and work centers were built out of a series of more to come in the future. By 1970, the number of primary and secondary public schools had doubled and accessibility of education for rural children had improved greatly.\footnote{Gerald Read, “Cuba,” in Deighton, The Encyclopedia of Education, pp. 560-564.} The matriculation rate of students increased twofold at the primary level and threefold in secondary schools. By the late 1960's over two million children and adults were enrolled in Cuban educational institutions. Over-half of these students were enrolled in the primary schools, and one-fifth were attending programs of adult education. The rest were enrolled in technical or academic schools on the secondary or university level. It was estimated that only 4% of the population was still illiterate.\footnote{Ibid., p. 563.}

From 1970 until today, enrollment in Cuban pre-primary schools has increased by nearly forty to fifty percent.\footnote{UNESCO 1999 Statistical Yearbook (Paris: UNESCO Press, 1999)} Cuban schools have maintained enrollments at the primary level at almost 100%. At the secondary level, in 1970 the enrollment was only 26% and jumped to a high in 1990 at 89%. Therefore, both primary and secondary schools have seen great improvements.

Access to schools for people of different colors, genders, economic conditions, rural/urban residence, and handicaps have also been quite successful. A personal account from Ronald Lindahl, professor and chair of the department of Educational leadership and policy analysis at East Tennessee State University, records that “my classroom observations did not suggest that the quality of facilities, instructors, materials, or
learning varied significantly for any of these categories of students." In order to reduce social elite favoritism, universities use standardized testing as the determinant in the admissions process rather than political favor. Some critics disagree with standardized testing, arguing that it creates schools for the gifted while rejecting many students, and hence not giving the majority of the population equal opportunity. The revolutionary movement also eliminated all private and church-supported schools, thereby emphasizing egalitarianism in yet another manner.

Also, looking at Cuba’s educational system in comparison to other educational systems in Latin America and Caribbean countries, it competes very well. Some important quantitative indicators of an educational system are enrollment rates, pupil-teacher ratio, literacy rate, access to education, and highest level of education attained.

Cuba’s enrollment ratios are phenomenal at the pre-primary level. In 2003, Cuba’s gross enrollment ratio is 115%, while the Dominican Republic is at 34%, Argentina, a very advanced Latin American country, at 60%, and the United States at 58%. In 2003, Cuba’s primary enrollment was 98% for primary school. This was slightly lower than Argentina and the Dominican Republic but the same as the United States primary school gross enrollment ratio. At the secondary level, enrollment in 2003 was 93% in Cuba. This figure was much higher than the Dominican Republic’s 59%, just under the United State’s 94%, and less than Argentina’s 100%. Cuba’s gross enrollment ratios at all levels between pre-primary and secondary education are very respectable and have been very stable since the 1990’s. Like the before mentioned countries, Cuba shows only a slight difference between the enrollment ratio of males to

---

33 Ronald Lindahl, "Comparing the challenges facing education between the United States and Cuba," *Education*, pp. 45.
females. For example in the year 2000, more males are enrolled in primary education than females, 106:102; however, more females are enrolled in secondary education than males, 80%: 84% respectively. Just three years later in 2003, there are more males enrolled in secondary education 94%: 92% respectively. Therefore, gender does not appear to play a role in the enrollment of students in Cuba’s primary and secondary schools.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{34} UNESCO 1999 Statistical Yearbook (Paris: UNESCO Press, 1999)
### TABLE 1

Gross Enrollment Ratios (percentage of the age group)

(Blank spaces signify that information was not available)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>(5-5)</th>
<th>(6-11)</th>
<th>(12-18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pre-primary</td>
<td>primary</td>
<td>secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Agentina</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNESCO 2003 Statistical Yearbook

Note * It should be emphasized that the gross enrollment ratios for pre-primary, primary, and secondary education combined, include all pupils whatever their ages, whereas the population is limited to the range of official school ages. Therefore, for countries with
almost universal education at a given level, the gross enrollment ratio will exceed 100 if the actual age distribution of pupils extends beyond the official school ages.

Also, the pupil-teacher ratio has decreased in the past few decades in Cuba and is lower than in many other countries. As can be seen in Table 2, in 1980 Cuba’s classrooms had one teacher for every seventeen students. In comparison to Haiti’s forty-four students to one teacher, Cuba’s students are at an advantage to learn in the classroom with more personalized and one-on-one instruction.  

35 Through the decades the pupil/teacher ratio remains below that of most other Latin American countries. Just to name a few, Cuba’s pupil/teacher ratio is lower than that of Argentina, Dominican Republic, Mexico, and even that of the United States. Looking at Table 2, one can see that in the year 2003, Cuba enjoyed a 11:1 pupil to teacher ratio while Argentina’s ratio was 17:1, United States’ ratio was 15:1, and Mexico’s ratio was 27:1. Therefore, although in Cuba resources are constrained, the environment in the classroom does not suffer by overcrowding classrooms to divert resources elsewhere, which commonly occurs around the world.

TABLE 2

Pupil/Teacher Ratio (blank spaces signify that information was not available)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cuba</th>
<th>Argentina</th>
<th>Dominican Republic</th>
<th>Haiti</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNESCO 2003 Statistical Yearbook

In Table 3 below, in the year 2003 the illiteracy rate was at a low 3.0% of total population. Of those illiterates, males and females compose almost equal percentages and Cuba has reported almost equal percentages for decades. Males are at 2.8% and females are at 3.1% illiterate.\(^{36}\) In comparison to nearby countries, Cuba’s rate of illiteracy is much lower. Looking at the table 3, in the year 2003, the Dominican Republic reports 15.3%, Haiti reports 47.1%, and Puerto Rico reports 5.9% illiteracy. These figures are much higher than that of Cuba’s 3.6% illiteracy. Comparing Cuba’s illiteracy rate to that of the United States, in 2003, the United States reported an illiteracy rate of 3%, which is the same as that reported by Cuba.

TABLE 3

Illiteracy Rate (ages 15 or older)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total %</th>
<th>Male%</th>
<th>Female%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNESCO 2003 Statistical Yearbook

Although many educational reform efforts have been made by the revolution to reduce the inequalities of rural education in Cuba, differences still may exist, but definitely existed in 1981 in the upper levels of education. 1981 was the most recent year that the Highest Level of Education Achieved was reported. Rural enrollment increased, but it still didn’t equal that of the urban population. Also, the highest level of education attained by Cuba’s population differed from the urban to the rural regions. More rural students discontinued their education at the primary level than the urban students, who continued on to complete either secondary or post-secondary levels of schooling. The gap between urban and rural attainment of education still existed to a certain extent in Cuba in 1981, and still may exist; although it is not as large as it once was. At the time, it was not uncommon for urban citizens of a country to have access to more education than its rural citizens. In 1981, a larger percent of urban Canadians were educated and achieved higher levels of education rural Canadians. Looking at Table 4 below, it can be
shown that the highest level of education attained by the majority of Cuban students in 1981 is secondary school, whereas, in Canada the majority of students attain post-secondary schooling. Therefore, in 1981 Cuba’s rural population was not equal in educational opportunities to the urban regions; however, the opportunity for education has improved and is increasing for the rural population and it is not as disadvantaged as many other countries’ rural populations. As a whole, most Cubans reach higher levels of education than citizens of other countries.

As of 1981, most Cubans were at least educated up to the secondary level. As one can see from Table 4 below, 40.2% of all Cubans complete education at the secondary level. Whereas, in 1981, only 10.7% of Peruvians and 7.6% of Spaniards completed a secondary education.
TABLE 4

Highest Level of Education Attained

(Blank spaces signify that information was not available)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Highest Level of Education Attained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba 1981 Total</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada 1981 Total</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru 1981 Total</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain 1981 Total</td>
<td>35.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNESCO 1999 Statistical Handbook

Although the revolutionary reform efforts taken to improve educational standards in Cuba have been drastically different from most other countries, the quantitative improvements are evident. Student enrollment increased, literacy increased, the pupil-teacher ratio decreased, the highest level of education attained increased, and access to education has improved. More importantly, the improvements have not only continued in Cuba's education, but have also been sustained through recent decades.

Now that one has seen the quantitative improvement of the education in Cuba since 1959, it is time to look at the qualitative information when globally evaluating
Cuba's education system. Qualitative variables include: quality of instruction (critical thinking, special education, collaborative-versus individualized work, technology, and student-versus teacher-centered learning), academic/intellectual freedom, political content, and democracy within the classroom.

I obtained the qualitative measures of education in Cuba through examining the literature, through observations of Cuban schools, through discussions with Cuban teachers and students, but mainly by evaluating the results of surveys taken by Cuban and American teachers and students. I systematically devised the questionnaires using twelve objectives in the area of quality of education (based on the four the before mentioned qualitative variables). I formulated questions that were targeted at meeting the objectives but without explicitly stating them (See Appendix I and II). In October 2003, I had the opportunity to travel to Cuba where I observed- and spoke with many Cuban students and teachers their classrooms. While in Cuba, I administered the questionnaires. Upon returning to the United States, I translated the questionnaires to English and administered them to American teachers and students. I surveyed 20 Cuban-students, 20 Cuban teachers, 20 American students, and 20 American teachers (See Appendix III and IV). *Note surveys were given in English to the American respondents. The responses do not necessarily adequately represent the entire Cuban and American population; however the results are interesting and eye-opening. I dispersed the surveys not exclusively, but mainly in the following areas: La Habana and Cienfuegos in Cuba, and Rochester, New York in the United States.
Quality of instruction

After much research and experience, I feel that I have come up with some of the most important ingredients to quality instruction. They include: collaborative learning, student-centered learning, mainstreaming, differentiated learning, parental involvement, critical thinking/problem solving, citizen preparation, technology, and equality.

Education scholars believe that collaborative learning is very important for the development of social skills. To determine whether collaborative learning plays an important role in Cuban education, I asked students and teachers the following questions:

What percent of time would you say that you work in a group and what percent of the time would you say that you work individually?

What percent of time would you say that your students' work in groups and what percent of time would you say they work individually?

Findings:

100% of Cuban students said that they worked in groups 50% or more of the time and 50% of the time individually, while only 50% of American students said that they worked in groups 50% or more of the time. 80% of Cuban teachers said that their students work in groups 50% of the time and 50% of the time individually while only 50% of American teachers surveyed said half of the time is spent in groups and the other half of the time is spent individually. Therefore, collaborative learning plays a large role in Cuban education, even more so than in American classrooms.

Student-centered learning promotes not only active learning and critical thinking, but it makes the student in control of his/her own education. Students tend to be more intrinsically motivated when they are in control of their own education. This is due to the
fact that they are doing things for themselves, not for others necessarily. To determine whether Cuban classrooms are teacher-centered or student-centered I asked students and teachers the following questions:

What percent of class periods does the teacher do the talking and what percent do the students to the talking?

What instructional method or strategy do you prefer to use in your classroom?

Findings:

80% of Cuban students said that their teacher does 75% or more of the talking while they do 25% or less of the talking in the classroom. 100% of the American students say that that do at least 25% of the talking and even 40% of the American students say they talk 50% of the time while their teacher talks the other 50% of the time. 70% of Cuban teachers say that their primary method of instruction is lecture-based and 30% use both lecture-based and discussion-based instruction. 70% of American teachers use a combination of lecture and discussion to teach and the remaining 30% report conducting lessons by discussion. Therefore, Cuban classrooms seem to be more teacher-centered than student-centered, whereas American classrooms are both teacher- and student centered.

Every student does not have the same learning ability. Therefore, modifications and resources help students reach their full potential. Most educational scholars believe that mainstreaming special education students gives them more opportunity to have a normal education and to reach their full potential. Also, segregating students, unless under extreme conditions, does not help anyone prepare for real life because in real life diversity exists. In order to determine whether or not Cuban education mainstreams
students with special needs and whether or not modifications and/or help is available for slower-learners or exceptional learners I asked students and teachers the following questions:

Are there resources, modifications, or services available for students who are slower-learners, exceptional learners, or disabled students? If so, what are they?

How would you describe your students?

Findings:

85% of Cuban students report that there are services or modifications available, but that students with disabilities are not taught in a regular education classroom. The services and modifications that Cuban students referred to are extra help and preferential seating for those with visual and auditory problems. These services and modifications are minimal. 80% of American students reported that resources, modifications, and services are available for students with special needs. They listed special education, after-school programs, the MAP (an accelerated learning program), paraprofessionals, and inclusion teachers.

The same question was directed towards teachers. 80% of Cuban teachers said that there were services available and nearly all of those teachers specified the service as being for slower-learners. 85% of American teachers surveyed said that there were resources, modifications, and services available for students who are slower-learners, exceptional learners, or disabled learners. They listed the same services above as the American students, and also included Advanced Placement to the list. 60% of Cuban teachers recognized their students as being diverse and 40% as uniform while 100% of American teachers saw their students as being diverse. Therefore, Cuban education does
accommodate for some diversity in its students, particularly those who are slower-learners, however to a much lesser degree than in American schools. No Cuban student or educator mentioned providing enrichment activities for exceptional students. Special education students are not mainstreamed.

In order to increase the likelihood of every student reaching his/her full intellectual potential different learning styles should be taken into consideration. For example, visual learners may benefit by seeing an organizational chart of the material presented and a kinesthetic learner may benefit by acting out an important event being discussed. To determine whether or not different learning styles are taken into consideration in Cuban education I asked students and teachers the following questions:

How would you describe the majority of class lessons?

What types of materials do you most regularly utilize in your lessons?

Findings:

60% of Cuban students surveyed reported that their teacher used a variety of materials in the classroom and 94% of American students reported the same. Exactly 60% of Cuban teachers surveyed confirmed their students’ response. 82% of American teachers surveyed claim to use a variety of materials in their lessons. Therefore, the majority of teachers in Cuba utilize a variety of materials in the classroom thereby recognizing different learning styles. Although more American educators engage in differentiated learning, this may be due to the availability of resources in the United States as opposed to the scarcity of resources in Cuba.
Parental involvement has been shown to be an important factor in whether or not a child is successful in school. To determine whether or not parental involvement plays a large role in Cuban education I asked students and teachers the following questions:

How many times would you say that your parents meet with your teachers during the school year?

How much would you say the average parent is involved in the educational process?

Findings:
100% of Cuban students surveyed reported that their parents meet with teachers more than eight times in a school year, whereas only 20% of American students reported the same. 80% of Cuban teachers reported that parents are involved in the educational process about 75%, whereas no American teachers responded with 75% of parental involvement. The majority of American teachers surveyed, with 80%, thought that parents’ involvement is approximately 25%. Therefore, parental involvement in Cuban education is very high, higher than in the United States.

Critical thinking and problem solving are higher levels of learning. People face situations in everyday life that require critical thinking and problem solving. If these skills are learned in school, students will learn to make better choices. What good is information if we cannot process and utilize it? To determine whether or not critical thinking and problem solving is often utilized in Cuban education, I asked students and teachers the following questions:

If you were your classroom teacher, what might you do differently?

What would you say you like most about your school/education? Why?

What would you say might be a problem in your school/education? Why?
How could one improve or change that aspect?

How much importance do you place on your students learning facts or dates when presenting history or political events?

When presenting controversial issues, whose belief do you tend to present?

Do students in your school have the opportunity to suggest changes in how the school is run (i.e. how to solve school problems, how to make the school better)?

Findings:

The majority of Cuban students said that they would not do anything differently as a teacher. One student commented that he would help the students with difficulties more, and a few students said that resources are scarce, but attributed that to the government, not the teacher. 20% of the Cuban students surveyed left the question blank. American students listed: less homework, more creative lessons, more Internet usage, and at least half of the students said that they wouldn't do anything differently. 100% of American students answered this question.

What Cuban students like most about their education is the new methodology of teaching, how well planned and well-prepared their teachers are, the fact that their education is developing them and preparing them for their future. American students liked: sports, friends, teachers, open lunch, challenging classes, and gym class. A few American students said that they were not impressed with their education. 100% of respondents, both American and Cuban answered this question.

The majority of Cuban students surveyed responded that they did not see a problem with their education/school. A few students responded that misbehavior was a problem and others listed lack of resources as a problem. Approximately 20% of the
Cuban students left this question blank. When asked about what one could do to change or improve that problem listed in the previous question, again 20% of the respondents left the question blank. Other students responded that students need to study more and teachers need to watch the misbehaving students more. Another student said that the question was difficult to answer because the problem was related to the country and not the educational system. American students surveyed listed as possible problems with their school or with the educational system: student disruptions, lack of respect, disobedience, school not fun, and lack of resources. Approximately 25% of American students surveyed also saw no problem with their education and 4% of respondents left this question blank. Solutions suggested by the American students were for teachers to write referrals, send kids out of the classroom, write grants for resources, and to give it time and keep working at it.

The purpose of asking the above-mentioned questions is not exclusively to learn about the positive and negative aspects of the Cuban educational system, but also to find out if the Cuban students surveyed could come up with answers to the questions. More Cuban students surveyed chose to leave questions unanswered than American students. However, the Cuban respondents who did choose to answer the questions made quality responses. The questions that were most often left blank were those questions that addressed the negative aspect(s) of education. The question that addressed the positive aspect(s) of education in Cuba had 100% response rate. The relationship between Cuban students and teachers is one in which the student respects his/her teachers. Therefore, based on the research, it would seem probable that the Cuban students surveyed would rather not respond negatively to any question regarding their teachers. Further, it may be
that they did not choose to comment in detail about problems that were out of the hands of the teacher, but in the hands of the system, out of respect for their country. Therefore, this leads me to believe, based on the responses, that perhaps critical thinking skills are emphasized in Cuba as they are in the United States until the point where they may interfere with politics. Cuban education prepares students to learn the mechanical aspects and to acquire of the political and moral message; it does not foster the ability to challenge the ruling ideology.

90% of Cuban teachers surveyed responded that they place great importance on their students learning facts and dates when presenting history or political events. On the other hand, only 40% of American teachers surveyed think rote memorization is as important. Cuban educators emphasize more rote learning than United States educators. When asked to comment about how controversial issues are taught, 60% of Cuban teachers surveyed present several sides of the issue while a surprisingly 30% teach their own beliefs. 90% of American teachers surveyed reported that they teach all sides of the issue. 80% of Cuban teachers and 68% of American teachers surveyed reported that students have the opportunity to suggest changes in how the school is run.

Critical thinking and problem solving are fostered to some extent. The majority of Cuban teachers are using upper levels of learning rather than rote learning, and although less often than in the United States, students are hearing various sides of controversial issues, and students can take part in the decision-making process in regards to their school. However, much problem solving and critical thinking is inhibited in the classroom when politics are the topic.
Education is supposed to prepare students to be better citizens. Volunteer work is an act of good citizenry. Giving students responsibilities gives them "ownership" of their education and promotes responsibility. In order to determine whether Cuban education prepares students to be good citizens I asked students and teachers the following questions:

Through your school do you participate in any volunteer work? If so, what activities are you involved in?

Do you have responsibilities as a student? If so, what are they?

How many times in the past year would you say that your students did voluntary work to help the people in the community?

Findings:

100% of the Cuban students surveyed said they participate in volunteer work. Cuban students listed: farm work, cleaning the school, reconstruction sites, and work in various community groups. Only 7% of American students surveyed are currently involved in volunteer work; however, another 65% say that although they are not currently volunteering, they have in the past. Cuban teachers responded that 80% of their students were involved in volunteer work six or more times last year, whereas only 20% of American teachers reported their students volunteered more than six times.

When asked about responsibilities, 80% of Cuban students surveyed reported that they do have them, such as being the president of the military detachment, but that studies are the priority. 60% of American students surveyed said that they have responsibilities as a student. They listed responsibilities such as learn, listen, complete work, be on time, get good grades, and not to disrupt the learning process. It seems that
those responsibilities listed by American students are “a given” for Cuban students, not above and beyond the responsibilities of a student. Many Cuban students participate in volunteer work and have student responsibilities, even more often than American students. It appears that Cuban education does prepare its students to be good citizens.

The more access students have to technology, the more they stay on the cutting edge. For example, in today’s society it has become a necessity to know how to use a computer. Also, through the use of technology, students are given another means to learn. This takes into account different learning styles. In order to determine whether technology plays a role in Cuban education I asked students and teachers the following questions:

- How many times per month would you say you use a computer during class time?
- How many times a month would you say you use the internet/email?
- Would you say that your school offers adequate access to up-to-date computers and technology?

Findings:

A surprising 85% of Cuban students surveyed reported that they use a classroom computer more than nine times a month, whereas 0% of American student surveyed use a computer in class as often. 90% of Cuban teachers and 90% of American teachers surveyed reported that their school offers adequate up-to-date computers and technology. On the other hand, 68% of Cuban students surveyed do not use the Internet, nor do they use email. Only 33% of American students report not using the internet/email. Therefore, based on the information gathered, it would seem that Cuban students do have access to some technology; however how up-to-date it is questionable. However, due to
the low number of student frequency using Internet/email, I would at least say that students’ access to up-to-date technology is less than average.

In order to say that equality truly exists in the Cuban education system, Cuban student and teacher responses should be similar, except perhaps from those of different grades. Also, observations should be similar from school to school.

Findings:
When I asked if males are encouraged to become teachers, 60% of Cuban teachers answered yes, while 40% of American teachers answered yes and another 20% answered yes, but at the secondary level only. Although the statistics suggest that Cuba’s education system has sought to provide equal education to its population, further research points to a few areas overlooked. Men are not allowed to be preschool or elementary school teachers because they are needed in other sectors of the economy.37 (Lindahl, 1999). This is also reflected in the statistics previously stated in that 95% of pre-primary and primary school teachers are female. Although adults have many opportunities to get an education for the first time or simply to go back to school, regular university education is open only to young adult cohort. Because I was only fortunate to observe and discourse with Cuban students and teachers from certain areas of the country, I cannot conclude that the education is the same in all parts of Cuba in terms of quality. However, having spoken with Cubans, both male and female, different ages, and different races within those areas visited, responses were similar.

The quality of instruction in Cuba seems to be good considering the resources it has to work with, or lack thereof. Although Cuba relies more on recitation and rote

---
acquisition than does the United States, it also utilizes problem-solving, collaborative learning, hands-on learning, and links lessons from the classroom to where they are put into practice in the real world. Instruction focuses more on teacher-centered learning than American student-centered classrooms; this is probably why Cuban classrooms are so much more disciplined, but all in all, the instruction is working and can be seen in the statistics. Cubans continuously score average or above average on standardized tests. The results of the latest UNESCO comparison of Math and Language test scores in Latin America found Cuba’s third-graders with a mean of 83.1% on Math and 87.4% on the language exam, compared with the next highest national scores, Argentina, at 47.3% and 60.7% on the same exams.

Teacher preparation is similar to that in the United States. There are similar education requirements, including a field experience. Many pedagogical institutes are linked to public schools. Due to the fact that Cuba is experiencing a shortage of teachers, many unqualified teachers are teaching. The pay is very poor for teachers. Many are leaving their careers for other more profitable ones. For instance, an average primary school teacher receives around $18 per month (paid in pesos), whereas a hotel taxi driver might make $20 a day. Good English teachers are scarce for the simple reason that they can earn so much more working in tourism. Also, many students who don’t have the grades to pursue their first choice career often settle for teaching, knowing that there are many vacancies. Therefore, in certain areas, such as English, the quality of instruction could be improved more than others.

Democracy in education

Democracy is important in education not only because it places the student in charge of his/her own education, but also because it allows students to have a right to express themselves and to develop into his/her own character/person. Democracy in education also promotes democracy in life. To determine whether there is democracy in Cuban classrooms I asked students and teachers the following questions:

If and when you are placed in groups, who chooses whom you will work with?
Are you currently taking any elective courses? If so, what are they?
Do you feel that you are allowed to express yourself in the classroom with adequate time and as often as you desire?
Can you discuss the outcome of an exam if it is not in your favor?
How many times in a week would you say your students participate in decision-making by way of vote?
Do you encourage your students to challenge information presented in class?

Findings:
The majority of Cuban students surveyed said that 75% of the time the teacher chooses his/her cooperative learning partner, as was the response by the majority of American students. 60% of Cuban students surveyed reported that they are not currently taking elective classes, whereas, 92% of American students said that they were not taking elective classes. The numbers reported were troubling and one has to wonder if students know what rights they have or whether they understood what an elective class is.
Perhaps an explanation of what elective classes means would clear up the confusion.
100% of Cuban students and 70% of American students surveyed felt they could express
themselves in class. However, many of the Cuban students with whom I spoke told me that it was true as long as it didn’t go against what the revolution stands for. 50% of the Cuban students and 90% of the American students surveyed reported that they could discuss the outcome of an exam that wasn’t to their liking.

60% of Cuban teachers and only 20% of American teachers surveyed reported that they conduct the decision-making process by way of vote more than three times a week in the classroom. 90% of Cuban teachers and 100% of American teachers surveyed reported that they encourage their students to challenge information presented in class. Research shows that democracy exists in Cuban classrooms.

**Politics in education**

Politics is everywhere. However, if there is too much of it at too young an age, people become politically socialized. I would have to say that this hinders one’s freedom to make judgments and choices as an individual. They would be making decisions based on their affiliation and not personal choice. Therefore, one would be held back from both freedom of expression and from the development of individuality. In order to determine the role of politics in Cuban education I asked students and teachers the following questions:

1. Are you a member of any student political groups?
2. What are the benefits of associating with the student political group?
3. What classes are required in the area of social studies?
4. Are you a member of a civic group?
5. Are you a member of the Communist Party?
Findings:

78% of the Cuban students surveyed are not members of a student political group. The majority of students left blank the benefits of associating with a student political group. However, one student said that it makes one look better in front of his peers and in front of government officials. In other words, the benefits are in the form of recognition. The disadvantages are that if one is against what the government stands for, he and his family can get into trouble.

100% of Cuban students surveyed reported that they took both regional and global classes in the realm of social studies. The same response was mirrored by the American students surveyed.

80% of Cuban teachers surveyed reported that they are not members of any civic group. 70% of the Cuban teachers surveyed reported that they are not members of the Communist Party.

Although it seems from the survey that politics does not play a major role in education, it does in actuality. Schools spread the Cuban revolutionary message. As previously mentioned, the curriculum, including books, is chosen by the Ministry of Education for the primary and secondary levels of the education system. The curriculum that uses Marxist-Leninist ideology teaches morality, the importance of community, and idolization of Cuban revolutionaries. Military training begins in the tenth grade and continues on. Higher education is to provide a communist education, where study, work, and military training combine to serve state interests.

The fact that structured education fosters a country’s ideology is not new or different. In the United States, we pride ourselves on freedom and democracy and keep it
no secret in the education system. The difference, however, is that in Cuba one must participate and support the government’s beliefs, or his education can be hampered with. Education is centralized. The curriculum for every class comes from the Ministry of Education. Students read about revolutionary leaders and celebrate them. Students start their day by singing revolutionary and patriotic hymns. Finally, as was mentioned before, students cannot freely express discontent in the classroom with the revolution. Therefore, politics definitely has its presence in the educational system in Cuba.

_Academic/Intellectual Freedom_

Encouraging students to think outside of the box and to learn whatever it is that they are interested in enables them to reach their full intellectual potential. In order to determine whether or not Cuban students have intellectual freedom I asked students and teachers the following questions:

How many times a month would you say that you use the internet/ email?

Have you ever been given the opportunity to participate in an educational foreign exchange?

Have you ever been given the opportunity to participate in an academic foreign exchange?

Was teaching your first choice as a career? If not, what was?

Findings:

68% of Cuban students surveyed reported and 33% of American students surveyed reported that they do not use the internet/email. 93% of Cuban students surveyed reported that they had never been given the opportunity to participate in an educational
foreign exchange while 94% of American students surveyed reported the same. The high percentages probably have something to due with the age of the students. The oldest of students surveyed was in the tenth grade. 90% of Cuban teachers surveyed and 90% of American teachers surveyed reported that they have had the opportunity to participate in an academic foreign exchange.

When asked if teaching was their first choice as a profession, 40% of Cuban teachers surveyed responded that it was not. Other professions listed were doctors, lawyers, and an artist. 60% of American teachers surveyed reported that teaching was not their first choice as a career. The reason for asking the before mentioned question is asked is because many Cubans are not able to be in the profession of their choosing because the government does not have a need for it. For example, if there is a need for only 100 doctors in the province of Matanza, only 100 students will be accepted into the medicine school. Because the American response was so high, further studies would be necessary in order to find out the percentage of Cubans who could not study what they originally wanted because of the government’s lack of need for that particular profession rather than because of a change in preference. Perhaps the 60% of American teachers were unable to find a job in the profession they preferred. In their case the market (rather than the government), acted as a coercive force.

Although one’s academic freedom in Cuba has its limitations, it has improved over the past decade. Subjects for literature and research that were once taboo are a thing of the past. This was proven when the movie “Strawberry and Chocolate” came out in Cuba, which featured topics including: homosexuality, prostitution, drug use etc. Now the Cubans can speak out freely about social problems in Cuba, such as a poor public
transportation system and food rationing issues; however, they cannot blatantly blame
Castro or the Revolution. Although Cubans aren’t locked up anymore for having
political opinions, they can be thrown out of work or be kept in a humiliating job. The
Cuban Revolution has still been successful in thwarting critical thinking and free
expression. The fact that Cubans defect to the United States all of the time speaks for
words.

The Cuban students are given some intellectual freedom. We can see that by the
time they are adults, they are given opportunities to take part in foreign exchanges.
However, much of Cuban intellectual freedom is denied. For example, foreign literature
and literature written against the revolution are not only hard to obtain, but there is also a
black list of certain textbooks in Cuba. Although many teachers say that students are
allowed to express themselves, Cuban students say that this is only partially correct.
They can express themselves up until the point where something negative is said about
the revolution and its leaders.

As was previously mentioned, the curriculum is chosen by the Ministry of
Education for primary and secondary schools. However, professors at the university
level can choose the textbooks to use in class. This is an improvement from earlier
revolutionary years; however, it is sometimes not practical. For instance, Aquila-
Lawrence writes about a University Economic professor who gloated about the fact that
he was using the same economics textbook that a leading U.S. university was using, but
he comments, “It doesn’t help those Cubans living in socialist planned economy to learn

---

40 David Aquila-Lawrence, “American Academics Invade Cuba and Find a Vibrant Intellectual Scene,” The
about a capitalist market economy?" That may be true but it is a step in the right direction.

Although there has been some headway in regards to academic/intellectual freedom, the question of academic and foreign exchanges has not been improved. While the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 increases the number of exchange students studying in Cuba, Cuba refuses to allow its students to participate in the foreign exchange program. With the U.S. embargo against Cuba in place, Cuba reports not having access to information pertinent for research. However, it seems that if it participated in the exchange program, Cubans would be in a better situation to gain access to information for development and research. Few academics are allowed to study in the United States; the price one needs to pay in order to ensure his return is very high, and this therefore, deters exchanges. Technology is outdated and limited, making it difficult to have access to computers where there is Internet service. Even if one has access, the Cuban government controls what one is able to view by blocking many web sites.

Qualitative variables of education indicate both positive and negative results in Cuba. The quality of instruction is good, democracy exists in education, but at the same time, political content does as well. Also, the area of academic/intellectual freedom needs improvement.

41 Ibid., p.48.
6. Conclusion

Although Cuba has areas related to education that it could improve on, as do all educational systems around the world, it has made great improvements since the start of the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Cuban access to education, enrollment in schools, literacy rates, pupil-teacher ratio, and the highest level of education achieved have all improved, along with the qualitative factors of quality of instruction and democracy in education. Although political content still exists in Cuban education and could benefit with less of it, it seems to have a small affect on most of the population’s ability to get a quality education. Academic freedoms have become slightly more liberal in Cuba in recent years; however, it is an area that also needs improvement.

The outcome of the Cuban Revolution cannot be finalized as far as results because we are still living the regime. However, with many opposing opinions, it is my conclusion that Fidel Castro made huge progress in education in Cuba. Comparing Cuba with many Latin American and nearby countries and considering its many obstacles, such as the U.S. embargo and the fall of the Soviet Union, its educational indexes are either comparable to or much better than those of the other countries. Overall, in light of economic crisis and the restriction of some freedoms, education in Cuba is good, if not better than education in many other countries around the world.
Appendix I
Teacher Survey Objectives, Research Questions, and Hypotheses

Survey Objective 1
To compare responses/opinions of qualitative nature questions about education in Cuba based on age, gender, race, class, and whether they live in an urban or rural area. *In order to say that equality truly exists among all Cuban students/teachers, responses should be similar, except perhaps from those of different grades.

Survey Research Questions:
Qualitative nature questions
Would you say that males are encouraged to become teachers?
a)yes
b)no
c)only at the secondary level
d)only at the primary level

Other Observed Research: What is the teacher’s age, gender, race, and class? Does the teacher teach in an urban or rural setting?

Research Hypothesis: No difference in responses were given to qualitative nature questions about the education in Cuba by teachers of different age, gender, race, class, and/or place of residence (urban/rural).

Null Hypothesis: Different responses were given in regards to qualitative nature questions about the education in Cuba by teachers of different age, race, gender, class, and/or place of residence (urban/rural).

Survey Objective 2
To determine whether collaborative learning plays an important role in Cuban education.
*Education scholars believe that collaborative learning is very important for the development of social skills.

Survey Research Question:
What percent of the time would you say that your students work in groups and what percent of the time would you say they work individually?
a)working in groups 100%, working individually 0%
b)working in groups 75%, working individually 25%
c)working in groups 50%, working individually 50%
d)working in groups 25%, working individually 75%
e)working in groups 0%, working individually 100%

Research Hypothesis: Collaborative learning plays an important role in Cuban education.
Null Hypothesis: Collaborative learning does not play an important role in Cuban education.

Survey Objective 3
To determine whether Cuban classrooms are teacher-centered or student-centered.
*Student-centered learning promotes not only active learning and critical thinking, but it puts the student in control of his/her own education. Students tend to be more
intrinsically motivated when they are in control of their own education. This is due to the fact that they are doing things for themselves, not for others.

**Survey Research Question:**
What instructional method or strategy do you prefer to use in your classroom?
- a) lecture
- b) discussion
- c) all of the above

**Research Hypothesis:** Cuban classrooms are fairly teacher-centered.

**Null Hypothesis:** Cuban classrooms are fairly student-centered.

**Survey Objective 4**
To determine whether or not Cuban education mainstreams special education students and whether or not there are modifications or help available for slower-learners or exceptional learners.
*Everyone does not have the same learning abilities. Therefore, modifications and resources help students reach their full potential. Most educational scholars believe that mainstreaming special education students gives them more opportunity to have a normal education and to reach their full potential. Also, segregating students, unless under extreme conditions, does not help anyone prepare for real life because in real life diversity exists.*

**Survey Research Question:**
Are there resources, modifications, or services available for students who are slower-learners, exceptional learners, or disabled students. If so, what are they?
- a) yes, _____________
- b) no.

How would you describe your students?
- a) uniform
- b) diverse
- c) other

**Research Hypothesis:** No special modifications are made nor resources utilized for slower-learners, and the disabled are not mainstreamed.

**Null Hypothesis:** Special modifications and resources are available for slower learners, and the disabled are mainstreamed.

**Survey Objective 5**
To determine whether or not different learning styles are taken into consideration in Cuban education.
*In order to increase the likelihood of every student reaching their full intellectual potential different learning styles should be taken into consideration. (i.e., visual, auditory etc.).*

**Survey Research Question:**
What types of materials do you most regularly utilize in your lessons?
- a) chalkboard
- b) textbooks or worksheets
- c) technology (i.e. overhead projector, computer)
d) all of the above

e) other

**Research Hypothesis:** Cuban education accounts for different learning styles

**Null Hypothesis:** Cuban education does not account for different learning styles.

**Survey Objective 6**

To determine whether or not parental involvement plays a large role in Cuban education

*Parental involvement has been shown to be an important factor in whether or not a child is successful in school.

**Survey Research Question:**

How much would you say the average parent is involved in the educational process?

a) 0%

b) 25%

c) 50%

d) 75%

e) 100%

**Research Hypothesis:** Parental involvement plays a large role in Cuban education.

**Null Hypothesis:** Parental involvement is minimal in Cuban education.

**Survey Objective 7**

To determine whether Cuban education prepares students to be good citizens.

*Education is supposed to prepare students to be better citizens. Volunteer work is an act of good citizenry. Giving students responsibilities gives them "ownership" of their education and promotes responsibility.

**Survey Research Question:**

Last year, how many times would you say that your students volunteered to help people in the community?

a) not at all

b) 1-2 times

c) 3-5 times

d) 6-10 times

e) more than ten times

**Research Hypothesis:** Cuban education prepares students to be better citizens.

**Null Hypothesis:** Cuban education does not prepare students to be better citizens.

**Survey Objective 8**

To determine whether technology plays a role in Cuban education.

*The more access students have to technology, the more they stay on the cutting edge. Also, through the use of technology, students are given another means to learn. This takes into account students different learning styles.

**Survey Research Questions:**

Would you say that your school offers adequate access to up-to-date computers and technologies?
a) yes
b) no

Research Hypothesis: Technology does not play a large role in Cuban education.
Null Hypothesis: Technology plays a large role in Cuban education.

Survey Objective 9
To determine whether or not critical thinking/problem solving is often utilized in Cuban education
* Critical thinking and problem solving are higher levels of learning. People face situations in everyday life that call critical thinking and problem solving. If the skills are learned in school, students will learn to make better choices. What good is information if we cannot process and utilize it?

Survey Research Question:
How much importance do you place on your students learning facts or dates when presenting history or political events?
a) great importance
b) some importance
c) little importance
d) no importance

Do students in your school have the opportunity to suggest changes in how the school is run (i.e., How to solve school problems, how to make the school better)?
When presenting controversial issues, do you tend to present:
a) several sides of the issue
b) your belief on the issue
c) the most commonly accepted belief about the issue

Research Hypothesis: Critical thinking/problem solving is not utilized often in Cuban education.
Null Hypothesis: Critical thinking/problem is utilized often in Cuban education.

Survey Objective 10
To determine whether there is democracy in Cuban classrooms.
* Democracy is important in education not only because it places the student in charge of his/her own education, but also because it allows students to have a right to express themselves and to develop into his/her own character/person. Democracy in education also promotes democracy in life.

Survey Research Question:
How many times in a week would you say your students participate in decision-making by way of vote?
a) not at all
b) 1-2 times
c) 3-5 times
d) 6 or more times

Do you encourage your students to challenge information presented in class?
a) yes
b) no

Research Hypothesis: Not much democracy exists in Cuban classrooms.
Null Hypothesis: Democracy exists in Cuban classrooms.

Survey Objective 11
To determine the role of politics in Cuban education.
*Politics is everywhere. However, if there is too much of it at too young an age, people become politically socialized. I would have to say that this hinders one’s freedom to make judgments and choices as an individual. Students would be making decisions based on their affiliation and not personal choice. Therefore, one would be held back from both freedom of expression and development as an individual.

Survey Research Question:
Are you a member of a civic group? If so, which one(s)?
   a) yes, ____________________________
   b) no

Are you a member of the Communist Party?
   a) yes
   b) no

Research Hypothesis: Politics plays a major role in Cuban education
Null Hypothesis: Politics plays a minor role in Cuban education

Survey Objective 12
To determine whether or not Cuban students/teachers have intellectual freedom?
*Encouraging students to think outside the box and to learn whatever it is that they are interested in enables them to reach their full intellectual potential.

Survey Research Question:
Have you ever been given the opportunity to participate in an academic foreign exchange?
   a) yes.
   b) no. If given the opportunity I would not like to participate.
   c) no. But, if given the opportunity I would like to participate.

Was teaching your first choice as a career? If not, what was?
   a) yes
   b) no.

Why did you choose teaching for your profession?

Research Hypothesis: Cuban students/teachers do not have intellectual freedom.
Null Hypothesis: Cuban students/teachers have intellectual freedom.
Appendix II
Student Survey Objectives, Research Questions, and Hypotheses

Survey Objective 1
To compare responses/opinions of qualitative questions about education in Cuba based on age, gender, race, class, and whether they live in an urban or rural area.
*In order to say that equality truly exists among all Cuban students; responses should be similar, except perhaps from those of different grades.

Survey Research Questions:
Qualitative nature questions
Other Observed Research: What is the student’s age, gender, race, and class? Does the student attend school in an urban or rural setting?
Research Hypothesis: No difference in responses were given to qualitative nature questions about the education in Cuba by students of different age, gender, race, class, and/or place of residence (urban/rural).
Null Hypothesis: Different responses were given in regards to qualitative nature questions about the education in Cuba by students of different age, race, gender, class, and/or place of residence (urban/rural).

Survey Objective 2
To determine whether collaborative learning plays an important role in Cuban education.
*Education scholars believe that collaborative learning is very important for the development of social skills.

Survey Research Question:
What percent of the time would you say that you work in a group and what percent of the time would you say you work individually?
a) working in groups 100%, working individually 0%
b) working in groups 75%, working individually 25%
c) working in groups 50%, working individually 50%
d) working in groups 25%, working individually 75%
e) working in groups 0%, working individually 100%
Research Hypothesis: Collaborative learning plays an important role in Cuban education.
Null Hypothesis: Collaborative learning does not play an important role in Cuban education.

Survey Objective 3
To determine whether Cuban classrooms are teacher-centered or student-centered.
*Student-centered learning promotes not only active learning and critical thinking, but it puts the student in control of his/her own education. Students tend to be more intrinsically motivated when they are in control of their own education. This is due to the fact that they are doing things for themselves, not for others.

Survey Research Question:
What percent of class periods does the teacher do the talking and what percent do the students do the talking?
a) teachers 100%, students 0%
b) teachers 75%, students 25%
c) teachers 50%, students 50%
d) teachers 25%, students 75%
e) teachers 0%, students 100%

**Research Hypothesis:** Cuban classrooms are teacher-centered.

**Null Hypothesis:** Cuban classrooms are student-centered.

**Survey Objective 4**
To determine whether or not Cuban education mainstreams special education students and whether or not there are modifications or help available for slower-learners or exceptional learners.

*Everyone does not have the same learning abilities. Therefore, modifications and resources help students reach their full potential. Most educational scholars believe that mainstreaming special education students gives them more opportunity to have a normal education and to reach their full potential. Also, segregating students, unless under extreme conditions, does not help anyone prepare for real life because in real life diversity exists.*

**Survey Research Question:**
Are there resources, modifications, or services available for students who are slower-learners, exceptional learners, or disabled students? If so, what are they?

a) yes, 

b) no.

**Research Hypothesis:** Special modifications and resources are available for slower learners or exceptional learners, and the disabled are mainstreamed.

**Null Hypothesis:** No special modifications are made nor resources utilized for slower-learners or exceptional learners, and the disabled are not mainstreamed.

**Survey Objective 5**
To determine whether or not different learning styles are taken into consideration in Cuban education

*In order to increase the likelihood of every student reaching their full intellectual potential different learning styles should be taken into consideration. (i.e., visual, auditory etc.)*

**Survey Research Question:**
How would you describe most classroom lessons?

a) Mostly on the chalkboard
b) Mostly from a textbook or worksheets
c) Mostly lecture
d) A mixture of all the above.
e) Other, 

**Research Hypothesis:** Cuban education accounts for different learning styles.

**Null Hypothesis:** Cuban education does not account for different learning styles.
Survey Objective 6
To determine whether or not parental involvement plays a large role in Cuban education.
*Parental involvement has been shown to be an important factor in whether or not a child is successful in school.

Survey Research Question:
How many times during the school year would you say that your parents meet with your teachers?
 a) 8+ times
 b)3-7 times
 c)1-2 times
 d)not at all

Research Hypothesis: Parental involvement plays a large role in Cuban education.
 Null Hypothesis: Parental involvement is minimal in Cuban education.

Survey Objective 7
To determine whether Cuban education prepares students to be good citizens.
*Education is supposed to prepare students to be better citizens. Volunteer work is an act of good citizenry. Giving students responsibilities gives them “ownership” of their education and promotes responsibility.

Survey Research Questions:
Through your school do you participate in any volunteer work? If so, what activities are you involved in?
 a) Yes, ________
 b)No.
 c)I have been in the past, but am not currently.
 Do you have responsibilities as a student? If so, what are they?
 a)yes, ________
 b)no.

Research Hypothesis: Cuban education prepares students to be better citizens.
 Null Hypothesis: Cuban education does not prepare students to be better citizens.

Survey Objective 8
To determine whether technology plays a role in Cuban education.
*The more access students have to technology, the more they stay on the cutting edge. Also, through the use of technology, students are given another means to learn. This takes into account students different learning styles.

Survey Research Questions:
How many times per month would you say you use a computer during class time?
 a)+ 9 times
 b)4-8 times
 c)1-3 times
 d)Not at all

How many times a month would you say you use the internet/email?
a) 9 times
b) 4-8 times
c) 1-3 times
d) Not at all

**Research Hypothesis:** Technology plays a large role in Cuban education.

**Null Hypothesis:** Technology does not play a large role in Cuban education.

**Survey Objective 9**
To determine whether or not critical thinking/problem solving is often utilized in Cuban education

*Critical thinking and problem solving are higher levels of learning. People face situations in everyday life that call for critical thinking and problem solving. If the skills are learned in school, students will learn to make better choices. What good is information if we cannot process and utilize it?*

**Survey Research Question:**
If you were your classroom teacher, what might you do different?
What would you say you like most about your school/education? Why?
What would you say might be a problem in your school/education? Why?
How could one improve or change that aspect?

**Research Hypothesis:** Critical thinking/problem solving is utilized often in Cuban education.

**Null Hypothesis:** Critical thinking/problem solving is not utilized often in Cuban education.

**Survey Objective 10**
To determine whether there is democracy in Cuban classrooms.

*Democracy is important in education not only because it places the student in charge of his/her own education, but also because it allows students to have a right to express themselves and to develop into his/her own character/person. Democracy in education also promotes democracy in life.*

**Survey Research Questions:**
If and when you are placed in groups, who chooses who you will work with?
   a) you
   b) the teacher

Are you currently taking any elective courses? If so, what are they?
   a) yes, ____________
   b) no.

Do you feel that you are allowed to express yourself in the classroom with adequate time and as often as you desire?
   a) yes
   b) no

Can you discuss the outcome of an exam if it is not in your favor?
   a) yes
b) no

c) sometimes

**Research Hypothesis:** Democracy exists in Cuban classrooms.

**Null Hypothesis:** Democracy does not exist in Cuban classrooms.

**Survey Objective 11**

To determine the role of politics in Cuban education.

*Politics is everywhere. However, if there is too much of it at too young an age, people become politically socialized. I would have to say that this hinders one’s freedom to make judgments and choices as an individual. Students would be making decisions based on their affiliation and not personal choice. Therefore, one would be held back from both freedom of expression and development as an individual.*

**Survey Research Questions:**

Are you a member of any student political groups? If so, which groups?

a) yes, __________

b) no.

What are the benefits of associating with a student political group, if any?

What are the disadvantages of being a member of student political groups, if any?

What classes are required to be taken in the area of social studies?

a) Mostly regional courses (i.e., Cuban history)

b) Mostly global courses (global studies)

c) Both regional and global courses

**Research Hypothesis:** Politics plays a major role in Cuban education.

**Null Hypothesis:** Politics plays a minor role in Cuban education.

**Survey Objective 12**

To determine whether or not Cuban students have intellectual freedom.

*Encouraging students to think outside the box and to learn whatever it is that they are interested in enables them to reach their full intellectual potential.*

**Survey Research Questions:**

How many times a month would you say you use the internet/email?

a) + 9 times

b) 4-8 times

c) 1-3 times

d) Not at all

Have you ever been given the opportunity to participate in an educational foreign exchange?

a) yes.

b) no. If given the opportunity I would not like to participate.

c) no. But, if given the opportunity I would like to participate.

**Research Hypothesis:** Cuban students have intellectual freedom.

**Null Hypothesis:** Cuban students do not have intellectual freedom.
Por favor, escoja la letra que corresponde a tu respuesta y llena los blancos cuando lo sea apropiado.

1. ¿Cuánta importancia usted pone en el aprendizaje de sus estudiantes al presentar datos o fechas de eventos históricos y políticos?
   a. gran importancia
   b. algo de importancia
   c. poca importancia
   d. ninguna importancia

2. ¿Usted diría que los varones están animados para ejercer la profesión de maestro?
   a. Sí
   b. No
   c. Sólo al nivel secundario
   d. Sólo al nivel elemental

3. ¿Qué por ciento del tiempo usted diría que los estudiantes trabajan en grupo y qué por ciento del tiempo diría usted que trabajan individualmente?
   a. Trabajando en grupo 100%, Trabajando individualmente 0%
   b. Trabajando en grupo 75%, Trabajando individualmente 25%
   c. Trabajando en grupo 50%, Trabajando individualmente 50%
   d. Trabajando en grupo 25%, Trabajando individualmente 75%
   e. Trabajando en grupo 0%, Trabajando individualmente 100%

4. ¿Cómo usted describiría a sus estudiantes?
   a. uniformes
   b. diversos
   c. otros, __________________________

5. ¿Qué método de enseñanza usted prefiere usar en su salón de clases?
   a. enseñanza
   b. discusión
   c. todas las anteriores
6. ¿Qué tipos de materiales usted usa más a menudo en sus lecciones?
   a. La pizarra.
   b. Libros de texto o hojas de actividades.
   c. Tecnología (ie. Computadoras, retroproyector)
   d. Una combinación de todas las anteriores.
   e. Otras, ____________________________

1. ¿Cuál diría usted que sería el porcentaje de padres involucrados en el proceso educacional?
   a. 0%
   b. 25%
   c. 50%
   d. 75%
   e. 100%

8. ¿Tienen recursos, modificaciones, o servicios disponibles para estudiantes que aprenden lentamente, que son incapacitados o son estudiantes avanzados?
   a. Sí, ____________________________
   b. No.

9. ¿Cuántas veces diría usted que sus estudiantes del año pasado se hicieron trabajos voluntarios para ayudar a las personas en la comunidad?
   a. ni una vez
   b. 1-2 veces
   c. 3-5 veces
   d. 6-10 veces
   e. más de diez veces

10. ¿Diría usted que en su escuela ofrece acceso adecuado para actualizar tecnología, tales como computadoras?
    a. Sí
    b. No

11. ¿Sus estudiantes en el salón de clases tienen la oportunidad de sugerir cambios, tales como resolver problemas en la escuela?
    a. Sí
    b. No

12. ¿Al presentar asuntos controversiales tiende usted a presentar:
    a. varios lados del asunto.
    b. sus creencias.
    c. las creencias más aceptadas por la comunidad.

13. ¿Cuántas veces a la semana diría usted que sus estudiantes participan en decisiones hechas en el salón de clases por medio de votos?
14. ¿Anima usted a los estudiantes a desafiar información presentada durante la clase?
   a. Sí
   b. No

15. ¿Es usted miembro de algún grupo cívico? Si es así, cuáles son?
   a. Sí, ____________________________
   b. No

16. ¿Es usted miembro del Partido Comunista?
   a. Sí
   b. No

17. ¿Le han dado alguna vez la oportunidad de participar en intercambios extranjeros académicos?
   a. Sí.
   b. No. Si se da la oportunidad no me gustaría participar.
   c. No. Pero, si se da la oportunidad me gustaría participar

18. ¿Fue la profesión de maestro su primera alternativa como carrera, si no cuál fue?
   a. Sí
   b. No, ____________________________

19. ¿Por qué usted escogió la profesión de maestro?
Por favor, escoja la letra que corresponde a tu respuesta y llena los blancos cuando le sea apropiado.

1. ¿Qué por ciento del tiempo dirías que trabajas en grupo y que por ciento del tiempo dirías que trabajas individualmente?
   a. Trabajando en grupo 100%, Trabajando individualmente 0%
   b. Trabajando en grupo 75%, Trabajando individualmente 25%
   c. Trabajando en grupo 50%, Trabajando individualmente 50%
   d. Trabajando en grupo 25%, Trabajando individualmente 75%
   e. Trabajando en grupo 0%, Trabajando individualmente 100%

2. ¿Qué por ciento de los periodos de clase el maestro es el que habla y que por ciento el estudiante es el que habla?
   a. Maestro 100%, Estudiante 0%
   b. Maestro 75%, Estudiante 25%
   c. Maestro 50%, Estudiante 50%
   d. Maestro 25%, Estudiante 75%
   e. Maestro 0%, Estudiante 100%

3. ¿Tienen recursos, modificaciones, o servicios disponibles para estudiantes que aprenden lentamente, que son incapacitados o estudiantes avanzados?
   a. Sí,
   b. No.

4. ¿Cómo describes la mayoría de las lecciones en los salones de clase?
   a. La mayor parte en la pizarra.
   b. La mayor parte del libro de texto o actividades.
   c. Una combinación de todas las anteriores.
   d. Otras, ________________

5. ¿Cuántas veces durante el año escolar dirías que tus padres se reúnen con tus maestros?
   a. Más de 8 veces.
6. ¿Haces trabajos voluntarios durante el año escolar? Si es así, ¿en qué actividades estás involucrado (a)?
   a. Sí.__________________________
   b. No.
   c. He estado en el pasado, pero no actualmente.

7. ¿Tienes responsabilidades como estudiante? Si es así, ¿cuáles son?
   a. Sí,__________________________
   b. No.

8. ¿Cuántas veces al mes dirías que usas una computadora durante el periodo de clase?
   a. Más de 9 veces.
   b. 4-8 veces.
   c. 1-3 veces.
   d. Nunca.

9. ¿Cuántas veces al mes dirías que usas el Internet/el correo electrónico?
   a. Más de 9 veces.
   b. 4-8 veces.
   c. 1-3 veces.
   d. Nunca.

10. ¿Si tú fueras el maestro, que harías diferente?

11. ¿Qué es lo más que te gusta de tu escuela/educación? ¿Por qué?

12. ¿Cuál crees que sería un problema en tu escuela/educación? ¿Por qué?

13. ¿Cómo uno podría cambiar o mejorar ese aspecto?

14. Cuando estás situado en grupos, ¿Quién elige con quién trabajará?
   a. Tu.
   b. El maestro.
15. ¿Actualmente tomas clases de electiva? Si es así, ¿Cuáles son?
   a. Sí, _____________________________
   b. No.

16. ¿Sientes que se te es permitido expresarte en el salón de clases con tiempo adecuado y cada vez que lo desees?
   a. Sí
   b. No

17. ¿Sientes que los maestros respetan tus opiniones y fomentan que los estudiantes las expresen?
   a. Sí
   b. No.

18. ¿Puedes discutir los resultados de un exámen?
   a. Sí
   b. No

19. ¿Eres miembro de algún partido político? Si es así, ¿Cuáles grupos?
   a. Sí, _____________________________
   b. No.

20. ¿Cuáles son lo beneficios de estar asociado a un grupo político de estudiantes, si estás en uno?

21. ¿Cuáles son las desventajas de estar asociado a un grupo político de estudiantes, si estás en uno?

22. ¿Qué clases son requisitos para ser tomadas en el área de estudios sociales?
   a. Mayormente cursos regionales (ie. Historia Cubana)
   b. Mayormente cursos globales (ie. Estudios Globales)
   c. Ambos cursos regionales y globales

23. ¿Te han dado alguna vez la oportunidad de participar en intercambios extranjeros educacionales?
   a. Sí.
   b. No. Si se da la oportunidad no me gustaría participar.
   c. No. Pero, si se da la oportunidad me gustaría participar.
Bibliography:


