

[Open Peer Review on Qeios](#)

The Young Pioneers of Cuba: The Formation of Cuban Citizens through Civic Education

Hege Andresen, Anders Breidlid

Funding: No specific funding was received for this work.

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Abstract

In this article, we contend that Cuba's civic education system is highly ideological, and the Cuban Communist Party's ideology strongly permeates citizens' social obligations towards the state, as imparted through civic education. The research demonstrates that the Cuban education system embodies a form of inclusive nationalism that offers a clear definition of membership within the collective society. As evidenced by our findings, Cuba has, through its Constitution, textbooks, and curriculum, played a crucial role in institutionalizing a particular concept of Cubanness, delineating what it means to be a Cuban citizen.

However, the imposition of specific values through socialist ideology faces threats from the economic crisis and the influence of the internet, tourism, and social media on Cuban society. Interviews with informants have unveiled the challenges posed by the rigid and one-dimensional imposition of this particular ideology in schools, revealing tensions, discontent, and fractures in the politicized teaching. The article also compares civic education in Cuba with the progressive Critical Global Citizenship Education.

This article is based on 6 weeks of fieldwork (September to November 2019) in Cuba, where civic education was explored in a 5th grade and a 9th grade school in Havana. The qualitative study was based on interviews with important stakeholders, observation of classes, and document analysis of the Constitution, the curriculum, as well as textbooks.

Keywords: Cuba's education system, ideology, civic education, Global citizenship education (GCE), Critical global citizenship education (CGCE).

Introduction

Following the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Cuban society underwent a transformation not only in its government but also in its approach to education. In 1961, the government initiated an extensive literacy campaign that successfully eradicated illiteracy, achieving universal education within the first decade post-revolution. Today, Cuba stands out as one of the rare countries in the Global South that has successfully implemented free education for all its citizens.

Since 1959, the Cuban state has held high aspirations for its students, expecting them to epitomize the principles of the revolution, consistently display their best qualities, and adhere to the behavioral standards prescribed by the state. In pursuit of these goals, the government established a range of institutions and formulated a code of conduct directed at the student population. These initiatives served a dual purpose: to nurture a revolutionary spirit within individuals and to cultivate a workforce deemed crucial for Cuba's progress and development (Fernández, 2000).

In Fidel Castro's words:

In the conditions under which we live, because of the problems that our country is facing, we must inculcate our youth with the spirit of discipline, of struggle, of work. In my opinion, everything that tends to promote in our youth the strongest possible spirit, activities related in some way with the defense of the country (Fernández, 2000, p. 88).

The article delves into the components of the narrative of civic education encapsulated in Castro's statement, which suggests a revolutionary ideology emphasizing the students' unwavering patriotic dedication to the state. This implies that education is meticulously structured and controlled by the state in a manner it deems most suitable for the majority of its citizens. The state wields the authority to determine the content of knowledge to be imparted and prescribes the official curriculum and educational materials.

On the basis of our research, we contend that Cuba's civic education system is highly ideological, and the Cuban Communist Party's ideology strongly permeates citizens' social obligations towards the state, as imparted through civic education. Our research demonstrates that the Cuban education system embodies a form of inclusive nationalism that offers a clear definition of membership within the collective society. As evidenced by the findings, Cuba has, through its Constitution, textbooks, and curriculum, played a crucial role in institutionalizing a particular concept of Cubanness, delineating what it means to be a Cuban citizen.

Ideology in Cuba Education

In this section, we explore the fundamental principles that underlie the ideological imposition within the Cuban education system, and we analyze the inherent tensions and contradictions within this ideology from a Cuban perspective.

In the realm of education, the question is not whether ideology should or should not be taught, but rather which ideology should be imparted (Apple, 2004). Ideological analysis isn't straightforward, as real-life ideologies defy rigid categorization, evolving through historical contexts (Gordy, 2015). The Cuban revolution laid the groundwork for Cuban ideology but sparked debates. Some argue socialism diverged from Cuban revolutionary history, while others use it to legitimize socialism as a distinct indigenous ideology (Gordy, 2015). Initially, the Castro regime didn't explicitly endorse Marxism-Leninism but promoted socialist values such as equality, universal access to healthcare, education for all, and equal opportunities (Smith, 2016). Later, they embraced a Marxist-Leninist approach, solidifying ties with the Soviet Union.

Moreover, the Cuban government has consistently emphasized the protection and furtherance of Cuban independence, as well as a steadfast rejection of U.S. imperialism (Smith, 2016).

The ideology in Cuba revolves around "cubanidad" (Cubanness) and the teachings of José Martí (Smith, 2016), which refer to the sense of national identity and cultural pride associated with being Cuban. It encompasses a set of values, traditions, and characteristics that are considered uniquely Cuban. Kapcia (2000) defines "cubania" as the teleological belief in "cubanidad," which draws upon a history of struggle epitomized by Martí. This ideology encompasses various codes and values within Cuban society, including activism, culturalism, moralism, youthfulness, and ruralism, along with a radical dissenting tradition, referred to as "cubania rebelde," which strongly acknowledges the challenges faced by pre-revolution Cuba. These challenges, it is believed, were not primarily the result of internal efforts but were influenced by external forces (Kapcia, 2000).

"Conciencia," on the other hand, goes beyond a simple awareness or consciousness. It refers to a deep and active understanding of political and social issues, particularly in the context of revolutionary Cuba, and is cultivated through education with explicit political objectives and active involvement in revolutionary activities, signifying a commitment to action (Blum, 2010). Fidel Castro himself defined "conciencia" as "an attitude of struggle, dignity, principles, and revolutionary morale" (Blum, 2010, p. 5).

Blum (2010) introduces the concept of "double conciencia" to capture the duality within Cuban society, shaped by the "contradictory economic and political reality that demands different and competing ideological values in order to succeed" (Blum, 2010, p. 202).

Cuba's socialist ideology isn't just endorsed by the state but ingrained in society due to its one-party rule and centrally planned economy (Gramsci & Østerling Nielsen, 1973). Cultural factors reinforce this dominance. Gordy (2015) argues that the Cuban ideology is both hegemonic and counterhegemonic, prevalent nationally but taking a counterhegemonic stance internationally. Living an ideology entails more than conformity; it involves belief in its fundamental values and navigating a constrained society, reevaluating reliance on specific conditions.

Civic education

Given that civic education and its relationship to ideology are central to our article's focus, it is imperative to delve into what civic education signifies within the Cuban context. The subject of "educación cívica" (civic education) was not introduced into the Cuban school curriculum until 1992. However, the absence of a formal subject should not be misconstrued to suggest that moral and political training were not integral to the educational system and the overall development of the revolution (Smith, 2016). In Cuba, civic education is a subject taught from primary school to the completion of secondary school. In primary school, the subject is referred to as "The World We Live In." Its aim is to help students grasp the political and social aspects of society as part of their citizenship education. It also includes early morning activities and visits to historical sites. In the later years of primary school (5th-6th grade), students have a formal subject known as "Education Cívica - How to Be a Good Citizen," which continues into secondary school. In universities,

civic education is referred to as "extension affairs," encompassing sports, culture, history, and debates. Civic education in Cuba plays a crucial role in shaping the ideology imparted to students.

Since 1959, the Cuban state has expected its students to embody the ideals of the revolution. To achieve this, the state has established various institutions and formulated a code of conduct aimed at socializing and regulating students according to the state's guidelines. The primary objectives have been twofold: nurturing a revolutionary character and cultivating a labor force considered vital for Cuba's development (Fernández, 2000). The Cuban education paradigm, post-revolution, goes beyond teaching and learning; it encompasses the development of individuals whose collective and personal identities are distinctly national and ideological. The presentation of citizenship education through civic education as a separate subject underscores the significance of citizenship education in the process of state formation (Kapcia, 2005). Moral values are not only documented in political documents; they are also deliberately emphasized throughout civic education and other initiatives by the Cuban state. These civic norms are intended to align across both public and private spheres, aligning with the citizenship ideals stemming from the revolution. The Cuban education paradigm places strong emphasis on molding individuals whose identities are deeply rooted in national and ideological values (Smith, 2016).

In Cuba, education is predominantly a part of the public sphere and is regulated by the state. It is organized in a manner deemed suitable by the state for the majority of its citizens. The state possesses the authority to determine the content of knowledge to be imparted and prescribes the official curriculum and educational materials.

Citizenship education and civic education

In a Western context, citizenship education and civic education have typically been closely linked. UNESCO and the United Nations are advocating for a concept called "Global Citizenship Education (GCE)," aimed at fostering sustainable development. GCE's core objectives revolve around equipping learners of all ages with values, knowledge, and skills rooted in principles such as human rights, social justice, diversity, gender equality, and environmental sustainability. The ultimate goal of GCE is to empower learners to become responsible global citizens, enabling them to understand their rights and responsibilities in promoting a better world and a brighter future for everyone (UNESCO, 2015).

The emergence of national citizenship coincided with the development of national civic education. Banks (2008) emphasizes the necessity of GCE as national borders become more permeable due to the international human rights principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN. This declaration asserts the entitlement of every individual, irrespective of their nationality, to freedoms like expression, religious belief, privacy, and the presumption of innocence when facing criminal charges.

Dill (2015) introduces the concept of "perspective consciousness" to illustrate the need to transcend or distance oneself from national, ethnic, religious, and class boundaries in order to cultivate a global perspective. By developing "perspective consciousness," students come to recognize that their worldview is not universally shared.

However, it's worth noting that some scholars question the universality of GCE (Global Citizenship Education), as

highlighted by Abdi et al. (2015), Kadiwal and Durrani (2018), and Kovalchuk and Rapoport (2018). These scholars emphasize the existence of asymmetrical power dynamics between Western and non-Western epistemological traditions, which lead to the prevalence of Western theoretical frameworks in citizenship education research, as discussed by Andreotti (2015), Howard et al. (2018), Skårås et al. (2019), and Wright (2011).

In light of these perspectives, the criticism directed at the hegemonic Western framework in the case of Cuba stems from its failure to recognize and address the intricate political landscape found in many countries within the global South.

While Global Citizenship Education centers on a global community but tends to overlook issues of neocolonialism and Western dominance, Critical Global Citizenship Education (CGCE) takes a critical, decolonizing approach to tackle the legacy of colonialism and the north-south power imbalance by deconstructing oppressive global structures and adopting a socially transformative perspective (Said (1995) and Freire (1972)). CGCE seeks to inspire change by providing safe spaces for learners to critically analyze and experiment with alternative perspectives, fostering internal transformation (Andreotti, 2006).

This approach necessitates the cultivation of critical thinking skills and global consciousness, enabling students to situate themselves within a world often divided along East-West and primitive-civilized lines (Pashby, 2012). The article explores Cuban civic education and citizenship education within the broader international discourse surrounding GCE (Global Citizenship Education) and CGCE (Critical Global Citizenship Education).

Methods and analyses

This article draws on empirical data gathered through a qualitative case study conducted in Havana, Cuba, in 2019. The objective of this case study was to provide an in-depth understanding of the participants' lived experiences, thoughts, and feelings within a particular context. It sought to capture the true essence of the situation, offering rich and detailed descriptions, as advocated by Geertz (1973). This research approach involved examining a specific case or phenomenon within its real-life setting and utilizing a variety of data sources, as recommended by Cohen et al. (2018).

The study evolved into a multiple case study, where the nuances of civic education were investigated in two distinct schools. The research methodology included semi-structured individual interviews with 5 teachers and the leader of a pedagogical organization, as well as 5 students from the 9th grade and 4 from the 5th grade. Additionally, classroom observations were carried out in a 5th grade class comprising 28 students, and a 9th grade class was also observed. Furthermore, the study involved an analysis of documents, specifically the Constitution and the curriculum.,

The use of individual interviews was employed to gain insights into several aspects of teachers' and students' involvement in civics education. These interviews sought to understand the motivations that drive teachers to engage in civics education, their utilization of pedagogical tools, and the relationships between teachers' curriculum knowledge and their instructional skills.

The empirical data gathered from these interviews was then compared with various documents, including the Constitution

of Cuba (2019), the national curriculum, and several civic education books such as:

Educación, M. d. (2019). Programas Educación Cívica, Secundaria Básica. Havana, Cuba.

Educación, M. d. (2014). Educación Cívica, Quinto Grado. Havana.

Educación, M. d. (2018). Programas Educación Cívica, Quinto Grado.

The study's primary focus is on analyzing how the informants, which include teachers and students, perceive the aims and objectives of civic education within a Cuban classroom context. This analysis is carried out in comparison to the assumptions and values associated with the concepts of GCE (Global Citizenship Education) and CGCE (Critical Global Citizenship Education).

Findings

Alignment with Official Documents and Values

This study demonstrates a significant alignment between the practices of Cuban teachers and official policy documents and textbooks. However, it also reveals a notable disparity when it comes to the underlying assumptions of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and Critical Global Citizenship Education (CGCE).

The profound influence of Cuba's revolutionary values on its educational system is evident. These values are deeply embedded in the curriculum, emphasizing the formation of personal convictions and behaviors in accordance with socialist principles. As one 9th-grade teacher highlighted, "We place great importance on instilling the socialist values upheld by the government. It's a collective effort, and our educational system is a key player in this."

Moreover, a 5th grade teacher confirmed: "The curriculum echoes the revolutionary values that are integral to our society. It seeks to mold students into responsible citizens who uphold socialist ideals." -

Teaching Oppression and Historical Narratives

Cuban civic education places a strong emphasis on teaching about oppression. This includes addressing the historical oppression of Cubans before the revolution and the ongoing perception of oppression from the Global North. The classroom curriculum integrates this narrative, portraying the revolution as a liberating force.

As a 5th-grade teacher noted,

Oppression is a central theme in our civic education. We address historical oppression and the ongoing perception of oppression from the Global North, portraying our revolution as a liberating force. Our history is a testament to the struggles against oppression. We want our students to understand the significance of our revolution in liberating our people.

Focus on Civic Education and Ideological Values

Civic education in Cuba extends beyond the confines of the civics class, permeating various aspects of the educational system. It plays a pivotal role in transmitting social norms and the revolutionary ideology. This broader approach encompasses subjects such as history.

A 5th-grade teacher emphasized,

Civic education is crucial for our students to learn how to be responsible citizens and uphold the values of our society. Civic education extends beyond the civics class; it permeates various aspects of our education system. We aim to transmit social norms and our revolutionary ideology, emphasizing responsible citizenship.

Defining Good Citizenship

The concept of "good citizenship" is a recurring theme in discussions. It is often described as individuals who love their country, respect others, adhere to international values, and uphold the principles of the Cuban revolution. Citizenship is closely associated with being born in Cuba or undergoing specific Cuban education. According to a 9th grade teacher: "We place great importance on instilling the socialist values upheld by the government. It's a collective effort, and our educational system is a key player in this." However, there is also a more inclusive perspective that suggests foreigners can become Cuban citizens by embracing Cuban values.

According to one 9th-grade student, "Being a good citizen means understanding our history and respecting our country's values. It's about being proud to be Cuban."

Formation of (wo)man as citizens

Social norms and ideology are primarily taught in the civics class. However, a majority of the informants stated that the reproduction of social norms and ideology also relies on other subjects in school, particularly history, in addition to other aspects of society. In the introduction of the 5th-grade curriculum (2019) in civic education, the outline of the essential purpose of Cuban education is explained:

Civic education is a part of a general education that addresses the formation of (wo)man as citizens. The subject leads to the achievement of the objective of a communist education, where the students go through a political education and learn their rights and political duties as citizens, as well as the process of how to coexist with the other members of society [...]. The subject will contribute to developing the knowledge, skills, abilities, feelings, values, habits, and norms of the students. In order to conduct what is required for the moral formation of the citizens and preparation for a full life in the construction of socialism in Cuba (Programas de Educación Cívica,

2018).

The curriculum's objective was confirmed by the 5th grade teacher, who emphasized that civic education is important because the students need to learn how to be good citizens and how to behave in society. In addition, one of the 9th grade students explained: "Civic education is important for us because we learn about our rights and duties as citizens."

The 9th grade curriculum, which is the students' last year of basic secondary school, correlates with the 5th grade curriculum: "The educational objective of each grade and level is the formation of values in students, with emphasis on responsibility, honesty, and patriotism (Programas Educación Cívica, Secundaria básica, 2009)."

This was confirmed by the 9th grade teacher, who highlighted that the aim for *basic secondary cívica* education is to make the students identify with their nation, Cuba, and be true patriots. "The students must learn the history of their country to understand the importance of socialism in Cuba. To form the right values and make them good citizens during their education is a priority in every grade and class, but especially in civic education." This is in line with what the teacher trainer said. She also emphasized the "good citizens" as a goal for civic education: "The main goal for civic education is that we want to educate good citizens, for Cuba and the world, to reach the goals we have as a society." Further, the 9th grade teacher also highlighted the aim to educate global citizens: "The students need to be aware of global problems, not just as good citizens of Cuba, but of the world." In additional interviews, in written sources, and in conversations, the notion that the goal of civic education is to educate "good citizens" often came up. In the process of finding out what is meant by being a "good citizen," the answers were often similar. The teacher trainer, for example, summarized a good citizen in three points: "1. Love the country. 2. Respect for other people, international values. 3. Respect for the Cuban revolution, and a willingness to contribute to the values of the revolution." However, when she explained how it would be for a foreigner to become a Cuban citizen, nationality played an important role: "If you were not born here and have not gone through the proper education, you might fail to feel the values of the revolution." Her remarks are supported in the Cuban constitution. Article 33 states: "You become a Cuban because you are born here, by Cubans." On the other hand, the five 9th grade students were more positive about me as a foreigner becoming Cuban: "You being in Cuba, being interested in civic education, is a great start to becoming Cuban." They also emphasized kindness, having the right values, and respecting the Cuban system. The 5th grade teacher highlighted that one must know Cuban history and the laws of the constitution, and that one must take care of and know the national symbols to be a good citizen of Cuba. The 9th grade teacher, however, focused on the loss of values in today's society: "Civic education is an urgent need for the society because of the lack of values and principles. This generation is the lost generation; it is time to focus more on civic education." He further told me about the terrible economic situation after the fall of the Soviet Union; they managed to keep education free, but there was a loss of values. However, he ended up contradicting himself: "Today we have recovered from this loss of values, and the values are rescued, even though the USA would want them to go away, this will not be the case." The English teacher agreed with his first statement and was concerned with the students' values, especially in the cities:

You have to teach the system and motivate the students to be good people. Civic education is easier in the rural

areas and more difficult in the cities because in the cities there is influence from the environment, where you have TVs, iPads, tourists—everything they see influences them, and it makes teaching civics more difficult. You teach them one thing, and they see another.

The students in 9th grade felt that civic education was important to them for keeping their values and understanding the political reality in their country and their rights and duties. They also wanted to continue with civic education to learn more about how to be good citizens in the future and how they should behave in certain situations. However, there was one 5th-grade student who expressed a dislike for civic education, stating, "I enjoy history education, but I find civic education too political, and I believe children should not be exposed to politics." In contrast, the president of the pedagogical institution emphasized that civic education goes beyond politics and plays a crucial role in fostering respect for people, culture, and tradition among students. He also focused on the teacher's obligation to educate the students all day:

Some teachers only focus on citizenship education in class. They do not realize that civic education covers all spheres of social life. It is not only political; it is also about nutrition, culture, traditions, respect for things and people, protection of the environment. Civic education is to preserve the values in society in addition to the general education in school (26.09.19).

His statement correlates with the 5th-grade curriculum: "In school, there are many ways to educate students to become citizens, but this work must be present at every moment of school life, which makes it necessary to rely on other subjects as well (26.09.19)."

Challenges in Preserving Values

While Cuba places a strong emphasis on preserving its values, contemporary society faces challenges in this endeavor. According to an English teacher:

Preserving values is more challenging in urban areas due to external influences. Students see and hear things that sometimes contradict what we teach in civic education. We faced a loss of values during economic difficulties, but we believe these values have been restored despite external pressures."

Economic difficulties following the fall of the Soviet Union resulted in a temporary loss of values. Nevertheless, there is a prevailing belief that these values have been restored despite external pressures.

Cuban patriotism

Cuban civic education places significant emphasis on cultivating national pride. The preamble of the Cuban Constitution starts with a tribute to the history of the oppressed and the brave patriots who fought against imperialist domination. It acknowledges the influence of Marxist and Leninist values, the birth of José Martí, and the inspiration behind the 1959

revolution. In Article 13 of the constitution, the purpose of basic and secondary education is clear: to channel efforts towards building socialism and strengthening national unity. As a 9th-grade student council president passionately articulated, "Our history is a testament to our struggle for freedom and identity. I am prepared to do my part because of the love I have for my country. Cuba sets an example for the world."

The curriculum for 5th-grade students seeks to develop their understanding of key concepts, including the socialist family, homeland, nation, socialist patriotism, socialist legality, work, and the political organization of society. It aims to instill a sense of duty and positive attitudes towards fulfilling patriotic responsibilities. Students are expected to demonstrate their rejection of capitalism, Yankee imperialism, and their conscious adoption of the Cuban socialist alternative.

During classroom observations, it was evident that the curriculum was actively utilized. The theme of "Cuba – mi patria (my homeland)" was discussed, with students expressing their love for their country. The curriculum also underscores the significance of national symbols and the flag.

In 9th-grade civic education, the focus extends to the ideological battle for human rights and peace in Cuba. The teacher emphasizes the importance of Cuban ideals in defending the country. This aligns with the broader objective of fostering responsible personal action among adolescents. In Cuba, there is a concerted effort to integrate civic education with the home environment. The school collaborates closely with families to ensure a holistic education. As the president of the pedagogical organization notes, "Families actively participate in the school community to contribute to better education for their children." The teacher trainer also highlights the role of home education as a foundation for building responsible citizens. While civic education plays a crucial role, there is a recognition that it is not the sole avenue for shaping Cuban citizens. The goal is to transform the thinking of students and integrate them into a shared national identity through cooperation between schools and families.

In summary, Cuban civic education, deeply rooted in national pride and socialist ideals, seeks to instill a sense of duty, patriotism, and responsible citizenship. It operates in harmony with the broader Cuban societal context and cooperation with families, all contributing to the formation of Cuban citizens.

Discussion

The analysis of findings sheds light on the central role that ideals and ideology play in Cuban civic education. The process of socializing students into Cuban citizenship begins as early as grade 1, but it's in the 5th grade and beyond that civic education exerts a more profound influence. The curriculum's purpose extends beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and skills; it also aims to instill moral values aligned with the Cuban socialist model. Notably, the curriculum implies that students will independently arrive at an understanding of the Cuban system's superiority. However, beneath the veneer of independent learning lies the subtle influence of the Cuban Ideological State Apparatuses, as described by Althusser, which quietly guides students' perspectives.

As aptly noted by a 9th-grade civics teacher, "There is no conflict between the state's convictions and mine... At least our

government does not spend time arguing against each other." This quote underscores the ideological dynamics at play within Cuban classrooms. While some students may express alignment with state convictions, it's essential to recognize the overarching influence of state apparatuses on their beliefs.

Cuban civic education fosters a collective identity among students, emphasizing national symbols, history, norms, and values encapsulated in the motto "Be a good Cuban." These shared values form a significant part of students' daily experiences, with the aim of transforming them into well-behaved citizens who serve as moral guides to one another.

As observed through interviews, 9th-grade students regard civic education as instrumental in preserving their values and understanding their responsibilities to their country. They express a genuine desire to learn how to be responsible citizens and navigate diverse situations. As one 9th-grade student stated, "Civic education is important for us to learn about our rights and duties as citizens."

While civic education serves as a powerful tool for ideological socialization, it is not without dissent. Some students express reservations about the overtly political nature of the curriculum, highlighting a desire to separate civic education from political indoctrination. Teachers, too, voice concerns that external forces make it challenging to impose the Cuban state's ideology. These dissenting voices raise questions about the balance between civic education and political ideology within the Cuban school system.

Cuban civic education, as illustrated in the 5th-grade curriculum, aims to cultivate a holistic understanding of citizenship. It seeks to develop not only knowledge and skills but also feelings, values, habits, and norms of conduct that align with the moral formation necessary for active participation in building Cuban socialism.

As the 9th-grade student aptly observed, "There is no conflict between the state's convictions and mine." This quote highlights the intricate power dynamics at play within Cuban classrooms. Students often navigate a complex space where their personal beliefs coexist with the dominant ideology.

Cuban civic education places significant emphasis on nurturing a collective Cuban identity. It achieves this through the promotion of national symbols, history, norms, and values. The curriculum encourages students to fully embrace their Cuban identity, instilling a sense of patriotism and duty as citizens. As another 9th-grade student expressed, "As a Cuban, the love for my country has developed over the years, and I have learned the importance of commitment. I am prepared to do my part because of the love I have for my country." This quote exemplifies the deep-rooted patriotism and commitment that civic education aims to instill in students, making love for the country a driving force behind their civic engagement.

Civic education in Cuba extends beyond the confines of the classroom. It serves as a mechanism for shaping personal convictions and behaviors throughout students' daily lives. Teachers, as key agents of this process, are entrusted with the responsibility of instilling the value system consistently. "The teachers need to realize that civic education covers all spheres of social life... Civic education is to preserve the values, so we can build and develop the students," as stated by the President of the pedagogical organization. This quote underscores the comprehensive nature of civic education in Cuba, highlighting its role in preserving societal values and fostering the development of students as responsible citizens.

The commitment to this process is a collective one, involving not only teachers but also families.

Gorski's concept of "organized persuasion" and the state's "cultural machinery" find resonance in Cuba's approach to civic education. The state actively shapes and disseminates ideological products, such as textbooks and curricula, within the public school system. As the 5th-grade curriculum (2018) states, "The essential purpose of education is the formation of personal convictions and behavior as a citizen, fit to build the new society and the conquest of the revolution." This curriculum excerpt emphasizes the overarching objective of education in Cuba, aligning personal convictions and behaviors with revolutionary ideals. Education is seen as a tool for advancing both individual and societal transformation.

Cuban civic education emerges as a powerful instrument for molding citizens deeply committed to the state and its values. While the curriculum suggests independent thinking, the lived experiences of students and teachers reveal the pervasive influence of state-sponsored ideology. Civic education serves as a cornerstone in fostering a collective Cuban identity, nurturing patriotism, and shaping responsible citizens who actively contribute to the nation's socialist goals.

As the Student Council President eloquently put it, "We want to be free and develop our national identity. As a Cuban, I have learned the importance of commitment, and I will do my part because of the love for my country." This quote illustrates the profound impact of civic education on students, instilling in them a deep sense of commitment and patriotism.

Critical Global Citizenship Education (CGCE) in Cuban Civic Education

In order to analyse Cuban civic education in an international perspective, this section explores the potential for students to receive Critical Global Citizenship Education (CGCE) in Cuba, as well as how Cuban civic education shapes students into "good Cuban citizens." CGCE differs significantly from conventional Global Citizenship Education (GCE), focusing on challenging inequality and oppression at both local and global levels, particularly addressing neocolonialism and Western hegemony. While GCE may carry Western-centric notions, CGCE prioritizes deconstructing oppressive global structures.

One of the challenges in introducing CGCE to Cuban students is their limited exposure to global perspectives. Cuban students' ideology is firmly rooted in their society, and they often lack a broader global consciousness. CGCE aims to create a space for students to analyze and experiment with different perspectives, fostering change from within. This is particularly relevant for Cuba, as its educational discourse traditionally lacks critical thinking elements.

CGCE explores asymmetrical global power relationships, emphasizing the influence of Northern and Southern elites in imposing their assumptions as universal. Cuba, historically oppressed and part of these global power imbalances, could benefit from CGCE by promoting classroom discussions on these imbalances and fostering a more inclusive global perspective.

While GCE promotes universalism, prescribing a specific vision of how everyone should live and what they should desire, CGCE hinges in contrast on principles like reflexivity, dialogue, contingency, and an ethical approach to difference. Integrating CGCE into Cuban education would require educators to adapt to this new discourse while encouraging

students to understand complex global issues.

Cultural identities remain important in society, but globalization necessitates students' ability to function in a globalized world. In Cuba, where the ideological basis is rigid, students have limited opportunities to discuss and critique the Cuban model or ideology. The curriculum predominantly focuses on historical events from a specific perspective.

Gramsci's concept of ideology's power, deeply ingrained in Cuban schools, makes it challenging to align with CGCE, which promotes alternative interpretations. Civic education in Cuba plays a significant role in shaping students into "good Cuban citizens" by instilling Marxist-Leninist values and reinforcing the history of oppression. The curriculum firmly guides students' thoughts in a specific direction, and alternative views and opinions are not accepted.

Cuban classrooms thus lack opportunities for open debate and free speech. While educators claim to encourage critical thinking, students frequently find themselves agreeing with the teacher, limiting dissenting voices. The focus remains on guiding students towards predetermined, positive outcomes, reflecting the hegemonic ideology of the Cuban state.

Cuban society presents a duality, with socialist and capitalist elements coexisting. The tourism industry and access to information via the internet expose Cubans to capitalism. This "double conciencia" allows citizens to navigate both socialist and capitalist realities, contributing to a complex societal landscape.

Admittedly, CGCE faces significant challenges when introduced into Cuban civic education. The ideological basis, rigid curriculum, and limited room for debate pose substantial obstacles. While CGCE could help address asymmetrical global power relations and encourage critical thinking, its implementation in Cuba would require a significant shift in educational paradigms. Nonetheless, recent protests and a changing political climate suggest the potential for a more accepting public space, potentially paving the way for a more diverse educational discourse in Cuba.

Concluding remarks

As this article shows, the profound ideological underpinnings of "Cubanía" are absolute and deeply ingrained in the national policies and educational documents that serve as the bedrock of civic education in Cuba. It underscores how the dynamic process of Cuban ideology shapes citizens' social obligations towards the state through civic education and related elements. The Cuban education system represents an inclusive form of nationalism with a well-defined concept of collective society membership.

Cuba's regime has effectively employed its educational system to socialize its citizens, equating social independence with subversion and counterrevolution. This ideological development plays a crucial role in civic education as it disseminates predetermined ideological tenets and contributes to state formation (Smith, 2016).

In Cuba, as in most countries, civic education is coordinated through powerful state apparatuses that prioritize students' moral development, according to the Cuban state. Textbooks play a pivotal role in this process, often reflecting the political philosophy of the ruling authority. Such textbooks, often referred to as "official knowledge," typically present

favorable images of the country and its people (Apple, 1993).

Cuban students are likely exposed to knowledge about history, great leaders, and good citizenship from an early age. This knowledge may not solely come from formal education but also from their everyday experiences. The contrast between Cuba's socialist ideology and the ideologies of other countries, particularly the US, is a central theme in the civic education curriculum.

The CGCE discourse promotes values such as tolerance, human rights, and democracy, which contrast with the notion of creating obedient citizens through critical thinking. The closed Cuban ideological discourse, paradoxically dependent on the global capitalist world, limits critical discussions of CGCE. Nevertheless, elements of CGCE can be found in civic education, especially regarding discussions of the US as an oppressor symbol.

The ideology evident in the Cuban curriculum and Constitution aligns with Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony. The state aims to convey its ideology, values, beliefs, and assumptions through civic education, exerting ideological control. As Gramsci notes, "The power of ideology is reproduced in the social structure, through schools" (Gramsci & Østerling Nielsen, 1973). Civic education in Cuba embodies this idea, with the state's intention being to reproduce its ideology effectively.

Civic education plays a significant role in constructing national identity, homogenizing differences among the population, and presenting the state's ideology as the sole truth. This excludes the Western interpretation of democracy, emphasizing the distinctiveness of Cuba's ideological perspective.

The primary goal of civic education in Cuba is to reproduce the state's ideology to ensure the continued formation of Cuban citizens in line with state values and beliefs. Cuban civic education serves as a multifaceted tool for ideological socialization, fostering a collective Cuban identity, instilling civic virtues, and encouraging allegiance to the state. While dissenting voices exist, the overarching influence of state apparatuses on students' beliefs is evident. Civic education's role in shaping Cuban citizens remains a complex interplay of ideology, values, and socialization.

The duality within Cuban society, marked by ideological differences and economic challenges, raises questions about how the state will navigate these complexities in the future.

References

- Althusser, L. (1971). "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." *In Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*. pp. 121–176. ISBN 0-902308-89-0. Translated from the French by Ben Brewster.
- Andreotti, V. (2006). Soft versus critical global citizenship education. *Policy & practice (Centre for Global Education)*, 3, 40-51.
- Apple, M. W. (1993). *Official knowledge: democratic education in a conservative age* Routledge.
- Apple, M. W. (2004). *Ideology and Curriculum* (third edition). RoutledgeFalmer.
- Banks, J. A. (2008). Diversity, Group Identity, and Citizenship Education in a Global Age. *Educational Researcher*,

37(3), 129-139. doi:10.3102/0013189X08317501

- Blum, D. F. (2010). *Cuban Youth and Revolutionary Values: Educating the New Socialist Citizen*(1st ed. ed.).
- Breidlid, A. (2007). Education in Cuba-an alternative educational discourse: lessons to be learned? *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education: Diversity and Inclusion*, 37(5), 617-634. doi:10.1080/03057920701582491
- Breidlid, A. (2013). The Educational Discourse of Cuba: An Epistemological Alternative for Other Countries in the Global South? In Breidlid, A. *Education, Indigenous Knowledges, and Development in the Global South. Contesting Knowledges for a Sustainable future*, pp. 141- 170. Routledge.
- Carnoy, M. (2007). *Cuba's academic advantage: why students in Cuba do better in school*Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Chomsky, A. Carr, B. & Smorkaloff, P. M. (eds.). (2003). *The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Duke University Press.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. R. B. (2018). *Research methods in education*(8th ed.). Routledge.
- Constitución De Cuba. (2019). *Constitución de la República De Cuba*Havana, Cuba
- Davies, I., Evans, M., & Reid, A. (2005). Globalising citizenship education? A critique of 'global education' and 'citizenship education'. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 53(1), 66-89. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8527.2005.00284.x
- Dill, J. S. (2015). *The Longings and Limits of Global Citizenship Education. The Moral Pedagogy of Schooling in a Cosmopolitan Age*. Routledge.
- Dobson, A. (2016). Thick Cosmopolitanism. *Political studies*, 54(1), 165-184. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.2006.00571.x
- Durkheim, É. (2002). *Moral education*. Dover Publications.
- Educación, M. d. (2019). *Programas Educación Cívica, Secundaria basica*. Havana, Cuba
- Educación, M. d. (2014). *Education Cívica, Quinto grado*Havana
- Educación, M. d. (2018). *Programas Educación Cívica, Quinto grado*
- Fernández, D. N. J. (2000). *Cuba and the Politics of Passion*(1st ed. ed.). University of Texas Press.
- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Harmondsworth
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays*. Basic Books.
- Gordy, K. A. (2015). *Living Ideology in Cuba - Socialism in Principle and Practice* University of Michigan Press.
- Gorski, P. S. (2003). *The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe*. University of Chicago Press.
- Gramsci, A., & Østerling Nielsen, K. (1973). *Politikk og kultur: artikler, opptegnelser og brev fra fengslet* Gyldendal.
- Griffiths, T. G. (2019). Socialism in Cuba: Debate and Socialist Renewal for the Twenty-First Century. *International Critical Thought*, 9(2), 236-253. doi:10.1080/21598282.2019.1613916
- Hawkins, D. (2001). Democratization theory and nontransitions: insights from Cuba. *Comparative Politics*, 33(4), 441-461. doi:10.2307/422443
- Hofstede, G. (1991). *Cultures and Organizations*. McGrawHill.
- Kapcia, A. (2000). *Cuba: Island of Dreams*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Kapcia, A. (2005). Educational revolution and revolutionary morality in Cuba: the 'New Man', youth and the new 'Battle

of Ideas'. 34(4). *Journal of Moral Education*, 399-412. doi:10.1080/03057240500410129

- MINED. (2009). *Programa Educaciòn Civica*. Havana, Cuba: Ministerio de Educacion
- Skårås, M., Carsillo, T., & Breidlid, A. (2019). The ethnic/local, the national and the global: Global Citizenship education in South Sudan. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 68(2), 1-21. doi:10.1080/00071005.2019.1598540
- Smith, R. (2016). *Education, Citizenship, and Cuban Identity*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Spivak, G. (Ed.) (1988). *Can the subaltern speak*. University of illinois Press
- Torres, C. A. (2017). *Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Critical Global Citizenship Education* Routledge.
- UNESCO. (2015). *Global Citizenship Education: Topics and Learning Objectives*. In. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Paris