

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

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This article offers some interesting insights into Civic Education in present-day Cuba. The initial promise is not fully realised; this reader was left with some key questions unanswered. Addressing some of these could enrich the article.

Given the sensitivities associated with Cuba's decision to follow a different pathway than many other countries, the authors might clarify how the study came about, how it was funded, their own position regarding civic education, and the ethical considerations that were addressed.

The potential significance of the research might also have been flagged. In every country, there are tensions associated with civic education, particularly between education and propaganda, between national priorities and global challenges, between broad principles and local issues, between individual freedoms and collective priorities. Potentially, Cuba offers a particular case of how such tensions are explored. The article does implicitly touch on the issue, but a fuller exploration – not least of the limitations of GCE – would be enriching. Dill (2015) (listed in the references) might offer a helpful framework here.

The article appears to cover a 60-year+ period. Greater detail about how Cuban society and educational policy - including developments in Civic Education – changed during that time could be illuminating. What did evaluations assert? What challenges were identified? When, for example, did it become clear that rural learners seemed more compliant than their urban cousins? How was this change, and other changes, responded to within policy documents, within recommended methodologies, within individual classrooms? For example, how did the collapse of the Soviet Union impact the curriculum and textbooks? When the writers state that "*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,*" further questions arise. The list of references suggests at least two studies that might add some flesh to these bones: Carnoy (2007) and Smith (2015).

The article is strong on the assertions and aspirations within the official approach to Civic Education. However, it seems that research conducted over a six-week period might have revealed more nuanced insights into differences between the curriculum as imagined, as presented, and as experienced. Related to that, it is disappointing that the authors give us little guidance as to the range of teaching and learning methodologies employed, preferred, and critiqued by Cuban teachers. Textbooks are mentioned as significant, so it would be useful if readers were given some indications about their format, content, style, etc.

How civic education as a specific subject and civic education as a whole school endeavour complement each other in Cuban schools might also clarify some of the assertions and, possibly, prompt further questions.

Finally, some light might be cast on how civic education teachers are educated for their specific role in Cuba.