

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

Andrea Riedemann<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universidad Bernardo O'Higgins

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

I found the article interesting, well-written, and well-founded. However, I have the following comments:

In the first parts of the article, I think it would be pertinent to rethink a little the apparent surprise that the Cuban education system is highly ideological: it is quite obvious that it is. All education systems select and decide which content to transmit, and it is obvious that in a non-democratic government, the predominant ideology will be fairly easy to identify.

There is a sentence where Apple (2004) is quoted, and I think it would be appropriate to paraphrase him, because otherwise, one is left with the impression that the author considers the idea that teaching must contain an ideology to be unquestionable. In particular, with respect to the sentence "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)," I think it would be more pertinent to say "... the question is not if ideology is taught or not, but rather to ask which ideology is imparted".

Regarding the presentation of results, I have the following comments/questions:

I missed a reflection about the question how free to speak did the teachers feel when they were interviewed. Are they really not able to be nuanced about the society they live in, or do they not dare to be critical for fear of reprisals?

There is a constant mention of values, but what about the value of freedom, such as the freedom to migrate? How do they manage to link the values taught with this restriction on human mobility?

I think it would have been interesting to confront, in the fieldwork, teachers and students with what the GCE or the CGCE propose, and not just leave the contrast between these two paradigms to the analysis of the author of the article.

On another level of comments, I think there is an error in one of the two quotes, because a teacher and a student appear to be saying exactly the same thing:

"As aptly noted by a 9th-grade civics teacher, "There is no conflict between the state's convictions and mine...". A few paragraphs further down it reads:

"As the 9th-grade student aptly observed, "There is no conflict between the state's convictions and mine."

I suggest that the term "Cubanía", which in several places lacks a tilde, should always be written with the first letter capitalised (it often appears as "cubania").

It would be interesting, for other studies, to see how this love for the country evolves over the years (with adults and older adults): do the adults feel identified by what the pupils express? Has it been worthwhile to be an unconditional lover of Cubanness?

I was struck by the fact that so little use was made of classroom observation. The only references to this technique are in the following paragraph:

"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".