

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

Magdalena Lopez¹

¹ University of Notre Dame

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Excellent article with an empirical approach to a topic that is generally debated on the basis of ideological premises without fieldwork or with very limited fieldwork. Anyone who has worked on issues related to the Cuban state (that is, almost all issues) within the island knows the difficulties of accessing information, data, or conducting surveys, interviews, and other quantitative and qualitative studies moderately independently.

Since the close relationship between education, ideology, and the state is not unique to any country, perhaps it would have been useful to emphasize and specify why Cuban civic education is more distant from the goals of the CGCE than in liberal democratic countries. Particularly revealing is the teacher's statement that: "There is no conflict between the state's convictions and mine.... At least our government does not spend time arguing against each other." A cultural hegemony based on the total identification between the individual and state/party/cubanidad/government makes any notion of citizen or civil society autonomy impossible. Even in those democracies where citizens empathize with their governments of the day, we find space for dissent or critical independence.

This aspect leads me to the question in the article of how to count on reliable data, particularly in interviews and classroom observation, in contexts where any public assertion different from that of state curricula has a very high cost in political and social terms for the people.

The cases of recent civil protests mentioned at the end of the article, as well as a good part of the cultural productions of the last generations, seem to question the efficacy of the educational apparatus to produce obedient citizens identified with the State. On the contrary, there seems to be a more globalized collective consciousness interested in exploring ideological pluralism and respect for human rights in the local context, and not only in the Global North. In this sense, it would be worth asking whether the diagnosis of the existence of a cultural hegemony dictated by a single State/Government/Nation/Party is still valid in Cuba. However, to determine this point, it would indeed be necessary to do more extensive independent fieldwork.