



RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

M.Ed. In TESL Program Country Informational Reports

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

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Cuba



<http://matadornetwork.com/abroad/photo-essay-classrooms-around-the-world/>

TESL 539
Eunyoung Jung

Geographic aspects

- Capital : Havana (La Habana)
- Official Language : Cuban Spanish
- Government : Socialist republic
- Population : 11,000,000



<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/caribbean/cuba/>

- Religion : Mainly Christian but Cuba was been an atheist state for the most of the Castro era
- Ethnicity : Mainly Spanish and African origin as well as Chinese, Haitian, and European

Educational Reform

- After the revolution in 1959, the government reformed the educational system. Pro-Castro sources claim that educational success is the result of the revolution's emphasis on education
- Cuba has been ranked number one in the quality of education in the Caribbean and Latin America.
- Educational success after the reform of education
 1. The accessibility of education
 2. The improvement of the educational level of the general population
 3. The expansion of formal schooling
 4. Ending the disparities between races, genders, and urban versus rural populations

Overall Educational Characteristics

- Cubans deeply value their education and they will go through much to achieve academic success
- Education in Cuba is free to all
- School attendance is compulsory from ages 6 to 15 from primary grade to basic secondary education
- Cuba offers free educational programs for those outside school-literacy, adult and informal education (as part of the basic education commitment)
- Great attention to teachers (extensive pre- and in-service training, high status and moral, transparent system of accountability, strategies for developing a culture of professionalism)
- An emphasis on education for social cohesion and the ideological orientation in the curriculum

Excellent Educational System

- Cuban education is outstanding and characterized by :
 1. Universal school enrollment and attendance : Literacy rate in Cuba : 96%
 2. Sustained high levels of investments in education
 3. Consistent policy environment, a comprehensive and carefully structured system
 4. Supportive of quality basic education and universal access
 5. Proportional female representation at all levels, including higher education
 6. Equality of basic educational opportunity, even in impoverished areas, both rural and urban
 7. A strong scientific training base, particularly in chemistry and medicine
(Ex. Cuba ranked first in math and science achievement at all grade levels, among both males and females)

Curriculum

- As Cuba is a Communist country, the government controls every aspect including education.
 - The Cuban Ministry of Education controls the curriculum of Cuban schools and ideological content from the Communist perspective.
 - The Ministry of Higher Education controls course and programs, teaching methodology, and the allocation of students' job place.
- > Both academically and politically best students are assigned to the most desirable careers which are international tourism, business, agriculture.
- > Students have very little choice to selecting a career path and no choice of courses once they major had been selected.
- Teachers and students are adapting the national curriculum and developing instructional materials locally.
 - Emphasis on combining manual and mental labor.

Level	Age	Curriculum	Compulsory	Class size	Homework
Primary grades 1-6	Age 6-11	Basic arithmetic, Science, basic literacy skills and composition in Spanish and English, geography, ideology orientation	Yes	25-40	Written homework, exercises, reports, essays, etc
Basic secondary Grades 7-9	Age 11-15	Spanish, English, the science, technical drawing, math, foundations of political knowledge, physical Education	Yes	25-40	Written homework, exercises, reports, essays, etc
Technical & professional secondary Grades 10-12	Age 15-18	English and military preparation are required.	Yes	25-40	Written homework, exercises, reports, essays, etc
Higher secondary Grades 10-12	Age 15-18	English and military preparation is required.	Yes	25-40	Written homework, exercises, reports, essays, etc
University	Age 18 +	Professional development : 5 years are required (medicine : 6 years) A master's degree : 1-2 years, PhD : 4-5 years	No	10-20 generally	Self study, and preparation; papers, reports, presentations

Classrooms in Cuba

- Cuban school children start their day by saluting the Cuban flag and singing a song honoring Che Guevara
- Secondary and high school students sing anthems and recite speeches about the important figures of the Cuban revolution
- Students wear uniforms with different colors of scarves
- Medical students in the university have uniforms



<http://www.juventudrebelde.co.cu/cuba/2008-10-17/youth-organization-elections-being-held-in-cuban-schools/>

<http://y2kbbunq.blog.me/20121091418>



<http://blog.naver.com/y2kbbunq>

Classroom in Cuba



- Textbooks reflect the Communist perspective
- Classrooms are decorated with pictures of Cuban revolutionary heroes such as Fidel Castro, Che Guevara
- Different values : Cubans values collective wealth, interdependence, brotherhood ; Cuba's value contrast greatly with American capitalism, independence, and individualism
- Political topics are best avoided in Cuba.

Teaching and Learning Style

Teaching Style

1. Mostly lecture format in traditional, teacher-fronted classroom
2. University : teacher lectures and teacher-led discussion-type seminars
3. Using blackboard and chalk is common; very few instructional materials available due to the shortage of goods
4. Teachers are generally very well trained and well prepared

Learning Style

1. Most work is done individually.
2. University : both individual and group work is common
3. Memorizing information and critical thinking skills are important
4. Taking notes is common
5. Students are expected to stand up when giving answers, they ask questions by raising hands and waiting to be called on

Discipline and Classroom Management

- Students have great respect for their teachers
- Teachers develop warm relationships with their students due to the fact that the students have the same teacher for more than 4 years
- Classrooms maintain a disciplined atmosphere, but punishment is not allowed
- Political disagreement is not tolerated in a classroom and students can not express an anti-Communist views
- Parents involvement in their children's education is expected; to foster community participation in management of schools
- Carefully structured competition that enhances the system rather than the individual

Other Issues

- 1. Pronunciation problem:** Cubans have similar English pronunciation problem like other Spanish speakers: b, d, bg, h, j, m, n, ng, r, sh, t, th, v, w, y, z, s-clusters, end clusters.
- 2. Pronunciation difficulty:** Pronouncing the difference between *bit* and *beet*, *bait* and *bet*, *bet* and *bat*, *would* and *woed*. The distinction between [y] and [j] is particularly important for Cubans to master, as pronouncing a y as [j] carries negative social value.
- 3. Communication Style :**
 - (1) Cubans are warm and friendly people and they express this warmth in their mannerisms.
 - (2) Cubans tend to stand close to each other when conversing.
- 4. Attitude toward English and the U.S.:**

Cuban still has mixed feeling and attitude toward the U.S. However, as they speak both Cuban Spanish and English in Cuba, young students open to English and the U.S. There are some pictures which show the signs “I love U.S.” on the school bus in Cuba.

Book

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