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Cuba's Education System: A Beacon of Light in Latin America Facing an Uncertain Future

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## **Introduction**

In May 2004, the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, under the chairmanship of Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, published the controversial “Report to the President” (CAFC, 2004), a comprehensive document that expresses in meticulous detail the political position of the U.S. government towards Cuba.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the report offers numerous recommendations for a hastened ouster of President Fidel Castro, a forced transition from a socialist to a capitalist economy, and an imposed U.S. style of democracy. The 423-page report critiques and advocates for restructuring nearly every aspect of Cuban government and society and includes 27 pages and over 50 specific recommendations for reforming Cuba’s education system. However, such a thorough critique and substantial list of recommendations by the U.S. government seems inconsistent with the widely held view that Cuba’s education system is one of the best among developing countries. As Lavinia Gasperini (2000), a World Bank specialist in Latin American, Caribbean, and African education, indicates in her report to the World Bank,

The record of Cuban education is outstanding: universal school enrollment and attendance; nearly universal adult literacy; proportional female representation at all levels, including higher education; a strong scientific training base, particularly in chemistry and medicine; consistent pedagogical quality across widely dispersed classrooms; equality of basic educational opportunity, even in impoverished areas, both rural and urban.  
(p. 1)

In order to address these conflicting views, two necessary and interrelated analyses are presented in this paper. The first is a comparison of Cuba’s education system and outcomes to 10 other Latin American and Caribbean countries using descriptive statistics published by UNESCO, clearly illustrating the extent to which Cuba’s education system excels in the region. The second analysis is a critical examination of the recommendations provided in the “Report to the President” by the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba. Contrasting official U.S. policies toward Cuban education with thorough and authoritative research is a necessary yet neglected element in discourse about Cuban education that allows for the consideration of possible ulterior motives of the U.S. government for requesting and participating in the production of the report.

## Comparison of Latin American and Caribbean Education Systems and Outcomes

Several studies have been conducted comparing Cuba's education system with other socialist countries, high-performing developing countries, and countries enduring long-term economic sanctions.<sup>2</sup> This analysis is conducted specifically in a regional context, comparing education systems in Latin America and the Caribbean. Additionally, Aguirre and Vichot (1998) have noted that statistics about Cuba, particularly data that can be used to promote Cuba's government, are often considered politically influenced and unreliable by social scientists. Their extensive quantitative analysis demonstrated, however, that most of UNESCO's statistics about Cuba are reliable and valid. Thus, only published UNESCO statistics are utilized for this analysis.

The 10 other Latin American and Caribbean countries included in this comparison are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela.<sup>3</sup> Much of the comparison will be framed around UNESCO's six Education for All (EFA) goals.<sup>4</sup> UNESCO (2006) has devised an EFA development index (EDI) to help monitor the progress of countries in their efforts to achieve the six EFA goals. The EDI provides insight into national education development and is formulated by combining four supporting indices for primary school enrolment, adult literacy, gender equality, and primary school survival (continuation through completion). The EDI rankings and corresponding education indices for the 11 Latin American and Caribbean countries are presented in *Table 1*. As indicated in the table, Cuba is ranked highest among the selected countries, with an EDI of 0.981, and is the only Latin American and non-English speaking Caribbean country considered by UNESCO as achieving the EFA goals, which is based on an EDI of 0.98 or higher.<sup>5</sup> Included among the 98 countries that are ranked below Cuba are Denmark, Luxembourg, Portugal, and China. The next column presents the total primary net enrolment ratio (NER), which is intended to reflect universal primary education. This is followed by the adult literacy rate and the gender-specific EFA index, a composite index reflecting the fifth goal of EFA. The final index is the survival rate to grade 5, which is intended to be a measurement of the quality of education. In addition to meeting the EFA goals, Cuba is ranked a notable 10th in adult literacy out of the 125 countries included in UNESCO's analysis.

**Table 1.**

UNESCO Education Ranking and Corresponding Education Indices for 11 Latin American and Caribbean Countries

Ranking	Country	EDI <sup>a</sup>	Total primary NER <sup>b</sup>	Adult literacy rate	GEI <sup>c</sup>	Survival rate to grade 5
27	Cuba	0.981	0.968	0.998	0.980	0.977
35	Chile	0.969	0.950	0.957	0.979	0.990
48	Mexico	0.949	0.998	0.910	0.962	0.926
50	Argentina	0.946	0.995	0.972	0.976	0.843
64	Venezuela	0.932	0.939	0.930	0.950	0.910
67	Peru	0.916	0.996	0.877	0.953	0.836
69	Bolivia	0.911	0.968	0.867	0.944	0.864
71	Paraguay	0.909	0.930	0.916	0.974	0.816
72	Brazil	0.905	0.940	0.886	0.951	0.844
84	Colombia	0.879	0.849	0.928	0.963	0.775
95	Dominican Republic	0.816	0.878	0.870	0.923	0.592

Table generated with data from UNESCO (2006).

<sup>a</sup>Education for All (EFA) Development Index; <sup>b</sup>Net Enrolment Ratio; <sup>c</sup>Gender-Specific EFA Index

In UNICEF's (2004) report, *The State of the World's Children 2005*, Cuba is praised for choosing to substantially cut defense spending during a period of financial crisis in the 1990s while demonstrating an unwavering commitment to children's rights by preserving education expenditures. Cuba contributes a significantly higher percentage of its gross national product (GNP) to education, as illustrated in *Figure 1*, than any of the other countries selected for this comparison. In fact, of the data available in UNESCO's (2006) report, only five countries exceed Cuba in total public expenditure on education as a percentage of GNP.<sup>6</sup> If it is true that, as UNESCO declared, the "levels of public funding for education...are key indicators of government commitment to the goal of education for all" (p. 76), then it is fair to conclude that Cuba, with its substantial economic challenges, is one of the most committed countries in the world to education.

**Figure 1.**

Public expenditures on education as % of GNP for 10 Latin American and Caribbean countries.\*\*

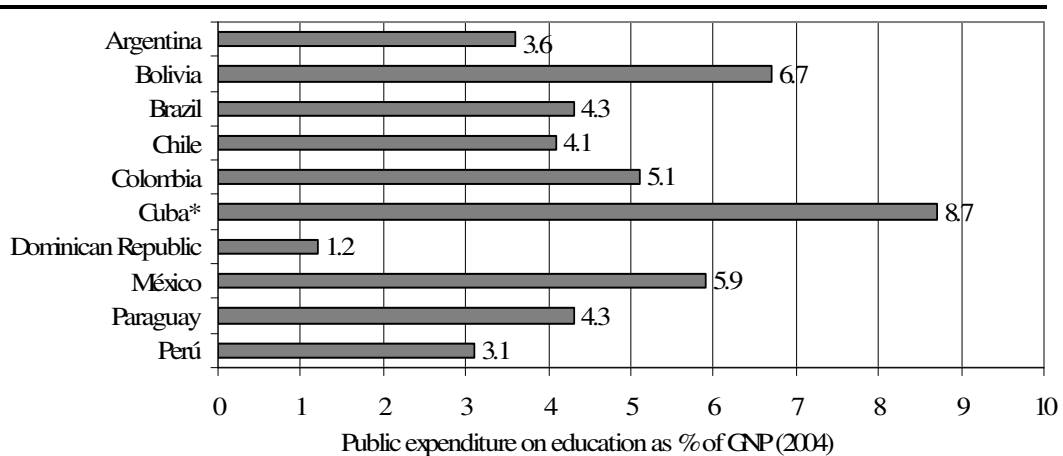


Figure generated with data from UNESCO (2006) and UNESCO-UIS (2006b).

\*The most recent available data for Cuba is from 2000 (UNESCO-UIS, 2006b).

\*\*Data for public expenditures on education as % of GNP for Venezuela is unavailable.

While UNESCO's education index accounts for enrolment and survival in primary school, attendance in secondary education is not taken into account. A report published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UNESCO-UIS, 2006a) provides primary school enrolment and survival and secondary school enrolment statistics. *Figure 2* shows these values for the 11 Latin American and Caribbean countries. Cuba exhibits nearly 100% enrolment and survival rates in primary school and the highest secondary school enrolment rate of the selected countries. While EFA applies to primary education, many countries face not meeting their gender equality goals because of unequal access to secondary education (UNESCO, 2006), which can only be remedied by providing secondary education to the entire student-age population. Again, Cuba demonstrates exceptional commitment to education, particularly gender equity.

**Figure 2.**

Rates for primary school enrolment, survival to last grade of primary school, and secondary school enrolment for 11 Latin American and Caribbean countries.

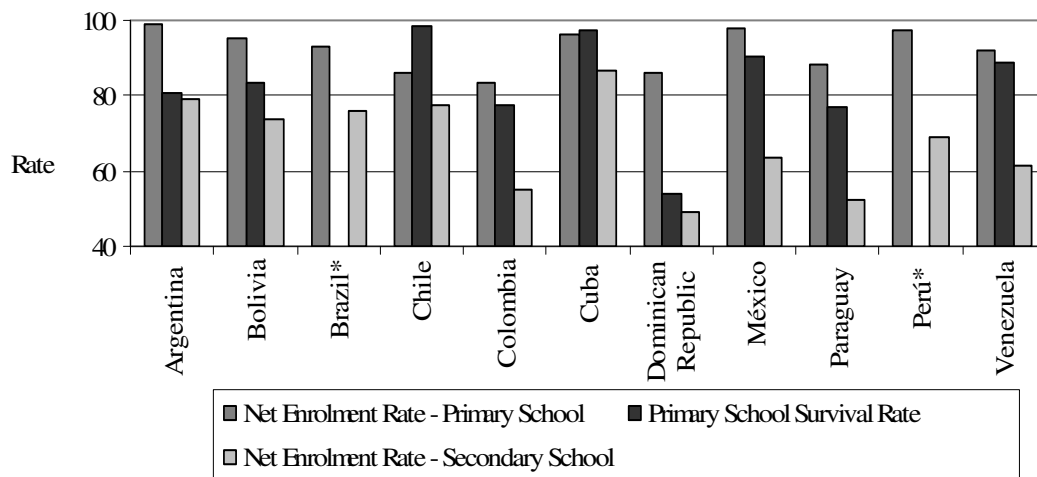


Figure generated with data from UNESCO-UIS (2006a).

\*Primary school survival rate data for Brazil and Peru is unavailable.

Specifically mentioned in UNESCO's evaluation of school quality, but not accounted for in its education indices, is the pupil-teacher ratio. *Figure 3* shows the pupil-teacher ratios at the primary and secondary levels for Cuba and nine other Latin American and Caribbean countries. Cuba has the lowest pupil-student ratio of any Latin American or Caribbean country, and an extraordinary 100 percent of Cuba's primary school teachers are trained (UNESCO, 2006).<sup>7</sup> These incomparable statistics again suggest an extremely high level of commitment by Cuba to children's rights by not only providing "education for all" but providing *quality* education for all of its children.

**Figure 3.**

Pupil-teacher ratios in primary and secondary schools for 10 Latin American and Caribbean countries.\*

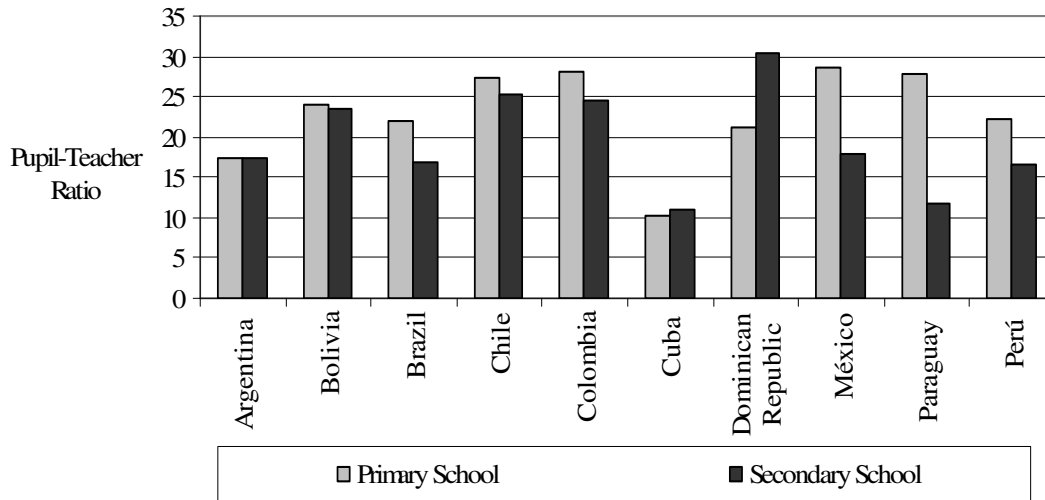


Figure generated with data from UNESCO-UIS (2006a).

\*Pupil-teacher ratio statistics for Venezuela are unavailable.

A study conducted for UNESCO's (2001) Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación sought to identify family conditions, school resources, and school practices and policies that produce high-performing primary school students in the subjects of language and mathematics. Twelve countries participated in the study, 11 of which are included in this analysis.<sup>8</sup> *Figure 4* presents 4 of the 16 specific factors measured by UNESCO. These statistics are indicative of the entire study—Cuba commonly stands out among the other countries. Incredibly, nearly all of Cuba's primary school children have teachers with no second job, classroom environments conducive to learning, and parents who are highly involved with their children's educational activities. This is an impressive claim that cannot be made by many developing *or* developed countries. Additionally, only 32% of the primary school children represented in this study have access to adequate library facilities compared to a substantially higher three out of four Cuban primary school children who have access. These factors alone shed substantial light on the importance of education in Cuban society.

**Figure 4.**

Comparison of student experiences in 11 Latin American and Caribbean countries in 4 of the 16 categories found by UNESCO to improve school systems.

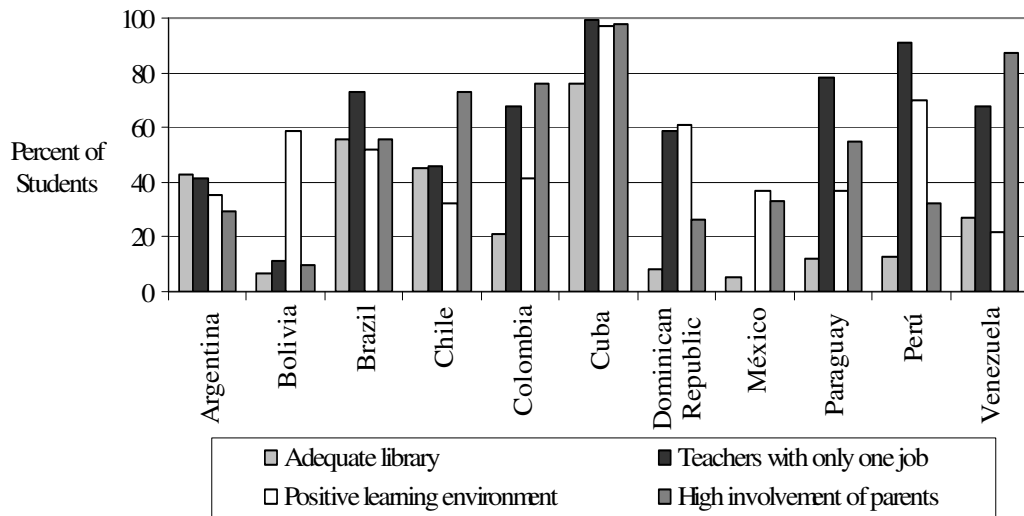


Figure generated with data from UNESCO (2001).

UNESCO's (2001) primary objective was to correlate the 16 factors it identified for school success with academic success as measured by a standardized performance assessment. A total of 51,507 language and mathematics exams were administered to third and fourth grade students throughout the countries—in rural and urban communities and in private and public education institutions. In both the third and fourth grade assessments, Cuba's results dramatically exceeded the other countries' to such an extreme that UNESCO had to create a unique category for Cuba in its analysis of the results. *Figure 5* presents the results (medians and quartiles) for the third grade assessment exams to illustrate the significant disparity between the overall results for Cuba and the other 10 countries, clearly stands out as a categorical exception.

Carnoy and Marshall (2005) conducted a comprehensive quantitative analysis of UNESCO's (2001) data to investigate possible reasons for Cuba's relatively exceptional performance in language and mathematics. The primary reasons for Cuba's high performance were found to be: (1) no child labor (an indicator of social capital); (2) low classroom violence (an indication of social organization); and (3) principal autonomy. However, they also concluded that, "much of the difference in test scores between Cuba and other countries remains a mystery" (p. 260). Thus, while the education system is necessarily a contributor to Cuba's high test performance, social capital and organization also play a



significant role in academic performance. Though this author is not an advocate for standardized testing, there does seem to be something very telling in the results of this study and all of the other statistical information presented in this paper that appear to be too frequently overlooked by some proponents of UNESCO’s Education for All goals, particularly the United States. Thus, a critical examination of the intentions proposed by the United States government for “transforming” Cuba’s education system (and other political and social systems) is necessary.

**Figure 5.**

Performance of third grade students in language and mathematics assessment tests in 11 Latin American and Caribbean countries.

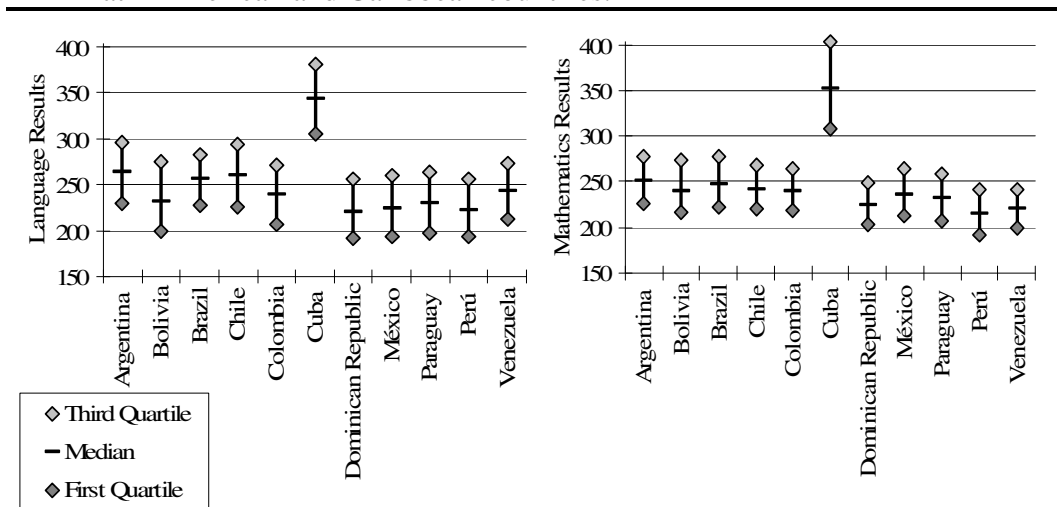


Figure generated with data from UNESCO (2001).

### Examination of U.S. Intentions to Transform Cuba’s Education System

On October 10, 2003, President George W. Bush announced the creation of a Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba that would “draw upon experts within our government to plan for Cuba’s transition from Stalinist rule to a free and open society [and] to identify ways to hasten the arrival of that day.” This Commission was thus established to focus U.S. Government agencies on hastening the arrival of a transition in Cuba, and planning to respond to this opportunity. (CAFC, 2004, p. xi)

The 423-page report by the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba (CAFC, 2004), published under the chairmanship of Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, offers “a comprehensive range of actions and programs that could be provided to hasten a transition as well as assist Cuba once a transition is

underway” (p. xiii) and represents the official position of the U.S. government towards Cuba. Several of the suggestions have already been implemented by President Bush, including increased travel restrictions and additional funding for specific programs to promote change in Cuba’s economics and government (Haney, 2005).

The report also includes 27 pages and over 50 specific recommendations for reforming Cuba’s education system. For the purposes of this examination, 10 of the more significant recommendations advanced by the Commission’s report (CAFC, 2004) are considered: (1) provide “equal access to educational opportunity” (p. 95); (2) “expand and emphasize exchange opportunities, making them available to Cuban educators, students” (p. 97); (3) “encourage Cuba’s new education authorities to consider some degree of decentralization” (p. 98); (4) “facilitate the development of private, including faith-based, education and training solutions” (p. 98); (5) “encourage the involvement of parents” (p. 99); (6) create “a system of standards, curricula, and assessments in core academic content areas and elective areas” (p. 102); (7) provide “incentives for youth to stay in school for twelve years and graduate” (p. 102); (8) “promote literacy and reading among Cubans” (p. 109); (9) “increase the quality and relevance of vocational and technical training” (p. 113); and (10) “support Cuban fine arts, music, folklore, decorative arts, architecture, and sports” (p. 117).<sup>9</sup>

The Commission’s suggestions for education reform were influenced significantly by the Cuba Transition Project at the University of Miami and its report, *Rehabilitating Education in Cuba: Assessment of Conditions and Policy Recommendations*, by Cruz-Taura (2003). Cruz-Taura briefly mentions the UNESCO (2001) report, stating only that it “showed Cuban third and fourth graders held the highest level of achievement in mathematics and language skills” (Cruz-Taura, 2003, p. 9). Instead of further addressing and incorporating the UNESCO research, Cruz-Taura examines the “current state of education in Cuba” by conducting an extensive critique of publications by *Granma*, Cuba’s official newspaper, and other media. Thus, while the Commission’s education recommendations, based on the Cuba Transition Project, should not necessarily be consistent with the UNESCO studies, the degree to which the recommendations are in discord with the extensive research published by and available through UNESCO is highly disconcerting.

The recommendations associated with providing equal access, increasing parent involvement, creating curricula, providing incentives for youth to stay in school, promoting literacy, increasing vocational training, and supporting the arts seem appallingly nonsensical since Cuba already excels in each of these aspects. The school life expectancy for youth in Cuba is already 14.4 years (UNESCO, 2006), more than two years greater than the 12 years the report is recommending that youth be expected to complete. Since Cuba’s youth and adult literacy rates

are 100 percent (UNESCO, 2006), why does the report suggest the need to further promote literacy in Cuba? Is it possible to get greater than 100 percent parent involvement in education? Do Cuba's absolutely extraordinary performance assessment results warrant a rewrite of the curricula in language and mathematics as suggested by the report? With 50 percent of students who complete grade nine entering technical and vocational education (Gasperini, 2000), why does the United States want to increase such training? If the U.S. government really wants to assist education systems internationally, should it not focus its attention and resources on assisting those countries that have not achieved the EFA goals, like Mexico, China, or Luxembourg?

Other recommendations also question the understanding and/or primary motivations of the Commission. While the United States promotes decentralization, UNESCO (2006) has indicated that such actions, particularly in transition countries, lead to a decrease in the quality of education and an increase in inequalities across socioeconomic classes and between rural and urban communities. Advancing privatization with an emphasis on faith-based education is not supported with evidence that the education system would be improved but instead simply promotes a neoconservative Christian right ideology.<sup>10</sup> And suggesting that an educational exchange program be expanded is comical in light of the fact that the U.S. embargo currently prohibits any such exchanges, and it is unclear how a nonexistent program can be "expanded." Having found the Commission's recommendations for Cuba's education system to be woefully flawed and intentionally or unintentionally indifferent to the international recognition and praise Cuba's system has received, this author felt that additional analysis of the "Report to the President" was appropriate and necessary.

Examination of CAFC's (2004) report finds numerous additional recommendations that seem to lack proper rationale or sufficient consideration. In terms of health care, the Commission recommends that a "plan should be developed for the immediate immunization for the major childhood diseases of all children under five who have not been already immunized under the existing health system" (p. 80). Apparently, the Commission had not heard that Cuba has one of the most successful national immunization programs in the world and has a better immunization record in most cases than the United States (UNICEF, 2005). The Commission also suggests revising Cuba's HIV/AIDS legislation, which, ironically, has been praised as a model for emulation by the World Health Organization for maintaining one of the lowest HIV prevalence rates in the world and the lowest in the Americas (Pérez et al., 2004). In discussing prison conditions in Cuba, the Commission states, "The high number of prisoners... is reflective of both the communist dictatorship's control practices and the high real crime rate" (p. 88).<sup>11</sup> Yet the Commission fails to acknowledge that the United States officially has the *highest* prison population in the world with an

incarceration rate of 738 imprisoned persons per 100,000 residents and an estimated 12 percent of Black males in their late 20s currently locked up in U.S. prisons (Harrison and Beck, 2006). What explanation might the Commission come up with for this high number of prisoners in the United States? Lastly, the report refers to Cuba three times as a “state sponsor of terrorism.” This claim is disputed by the Center for International Policy, which has not found a single piece of evidence suggesting Cuba sponsors terrorism and has found numerous accounts of Cuba denouncing terrorism and offering to sign an agreement to cooperate with the United States in combating terrorism (Smith, Muse, & Baker, 2004). Conversely, the United States has been complacent with individuals accused of terrorism against Cuba, including Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles, who are suspects in the bombing of a Cubana Airline flight in 1976 and other terrorist attacks against Cuba, by not trying them for the crimes or granting extradition requests for them to be tried in other countries (Stohl, 2008).

As we consider striking inconsistencies and blatant errors, it is important to recognize that the participants in compiling this report include the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, the Interior, Justice, Labor, State, Transportation, and the Treasury; the Army Corps of Engineers; the Environmental Protection Agency; the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission; the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; the National Security Council; the Office of National Drug Control Policy; the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative; the Overseas Private Investment Corporation; the Peace Corps; the Small Business Administration; the Social Security Administration; the U.S. Agency for International Development; and the U.S. Coast Guard. Nearly every appendage of the United States government was involved in the production of this report. As the world continues to face crises in terms of unequal access to quality education and healthcare, religious and cultural intolerance, global financial and resource inequalities, environmental degradation, poverty and famine, terrorism, and an escalation in warfare, it seems the U.S. government could find a much better use of its attention and resources.

The significant issues raised about this report, which Ricardo Alarcón (2008), president of Cuba’s National Assembly, describes as “interventionist and arrogant” (p. 383), beg the question of why the U.S. government, especially the current administration, has been pursuing a course that will inevitably devastate an education commitment, system, and record that most developing countries might only dream of attaining. Former President Carter (2002) suggested a political motivation for the U.S. government’s fixation on Cuba during a speech at the University of Havana on May 14, 2002:

I think we have to realize now that Florida is a very important state, not only in deciding who will be the governor of Florida, and that’s the

President's brother, but also how Florida will vote, could determine the results of the national elections for President. And in the state of Florida, the Cuban-American community [is] loudly opposed to normalized relations with Cuba, and this is a very important factor. (p. 6)

Additionally, Haney (2005) argues that the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba was created, and several of the committee's recommendations implemented, specifically "to court these voters in Florida" (p. 294). Is it really possible that such an effort would be conducted just to appease and gain votes from a powerful minority population in Florida? Considering the fact that George W. Bush could not have won either the 2000 or 2004 Presidential elections if he had not taken Florida, there is potentially some merit to this suggestion.

McLaren and Pinkney-Pastrana (2001) offer another explanation: "The real reason for US ire is that Fidel abolished private corporate control of the economy, nationalized US holdings, and made impressive gains in abolishing the clan structure through an emphasis on collectivization" (p. 213). Their contention is that Cuba has become an obsession of the U.S. government because of Cuba's refusal at all costs to acquiesce and become an oppressed state within the global capitalist system. The U.S. obsession with Cuba is clearly evident in its continued economic, commercial, and financial embargo against Cuba, which Human Rights Watch (2005) argues "continues to impose indiscriminate hardship on the Cuban people" (p. 212).<sup>12</sup> In specific response to the two reports by the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, Egan (2007) contends, "The Commission's work expresses the central theses of neoliberalism, and it is directed against the state which has consistently been neoliberalism's most significant opponent" (p. 29). As an alternative system that is based on a fundamental egalitarianism, Cuba risks shattering the illusionary and entirely fallacious contention that capitalism is the guiding light to a brighter future. If Cuba's successes are illuminated, the perjurious light of capitalism that leads the elites to even higher states of privilege will be snuffed out.

### **Conclusion: Considering the Future of Cuba's Education System**

By what moral or legal standard does the U.S. government presume to tell Cuba what to do? Instead, Cuba should be studied as a unique example of a participatory society with economic justice—not a utopia, but a country with an operational imaginary. Imagine! (Bray & Bray, 2005, p. 7)

With the recent changes in Cuba's political leadership, powerful people in the ivory towers of core capitalist governments and multinational corporations throughout the world are inevitably plotting to influence Cuba's future, which will necessarily impact Cuba's education, healthcare, and other social systems. A

meaningful dialogue about this issue is not adequately present in U.S. political debates, news media, or classrooms. While comparative educators and major international aid and monitoring agencies continue the discourse about the implausibility of achieving Education for All in much of the developing world, Cuba's exemplary education system, which "demonstrates that a poor country can build an education system of very high quality that truly reaches all" (Gasperini, 2000, p. 22), is on the brink of a perilous and avoidable cataclysm. Unless sufficient attention and consideration are given to both Cuba's outstanding system and the potentially serious threats of interference by the U.S. government for political and ideological motives, the future of this beacon of light in Latin America is at serious risk.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, chaired by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and co-chaired by Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez, published a second report in 2006 (CAFC, 2006). This report focuses specifically on supporting a so-called “Cuban Transition Government” and only addresses education minimally.

<sup>2</sup>See Cheng & Manning (2003) for a comparison with China’s education system; Torres (1991) for a comparison of the education systems of Cuba, Nicaragua, and Grenada; and Carnoy, Samoff, Burris, Johnston, & Torres (1990) for case studies of China, Cuba, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Nicaragua. See Mehrotra (1998) for an education comparison of Cuba, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Kerala, Sri Lanka, Botswana, Mauritius, Zimbabwe, Barbados, and Costa Rica. See Garfield (2000) for an excellent analysis of Cuba’s and Iraq’s health care systems under the sanctions imposed by the United States.

<sup>3</sup>The 11 Latin American and Caribbean countries were selected based on inclusion in both the UNESCO Education for All Development Index analysis (UNESCO, 2006) and the first UNESCO international comparative study of language, mathematics, and associated factors for third and fourth grade students (UNESCO, 2001). However, not all comparison data is available for all of the 11 countries; for example, data is not available for pupil-teacher ratio statistics and public expenditures on education as % of GNP for Venezuela and primary school survival rate for Brazil and Peru.

<sup>4</sup>The six EFA goals are: “(1) Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children; (2) Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality; (3) Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes; (4) Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults; (5) Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality; and (6) Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills” (UNESCO, 2006, p. 13).

<sup>5</sup>The 3 English-speaking Lesser Antilles countries of Barbados, Trinidad, and Tobago are among the top 25 countries and have higher rankings than Cuba. In addition to no other Latin American or non-English-speaking Caribbean country achieving EFA, no African or Middle Eastern (with the exception of Israel) countries have achieved EFA, according to UNESCO (2006).

<sup>6</sup>The five countries exceeding Cuba in education expenditures as a percent of GNP (8.7%) are the island nations of the Marshall Islands (11.9%), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (11.7%), Vanuatu (10%), Palau (9.7%), and Kiribati (9.3%).

<sup>7</sup>“Trained” teachers are those who “have received the minimum organized teacher-training (pre-service or in-service) required by a given country” (UNESCO, 2006, p. 50). The average percentage of trained teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean is 79%. The only other countries in the region that equal Cuba’s record of 100% trained teachers are the Caribbean countries of Aruba, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, and Netherland Antilles. Additionally, UNESCO (2006) indicates that a cross-national comparison of statistics for teacher training is difficult for two reasons: (1) data is usually provided by each country’s Ministry of Education, not by an independent audit; and (2) each country has a different requirement for teacher training.

<sup>8</sup>Honduras was the 12th country in the UNESCO (2001) comparative education study but is not part of this particular analysis because it was not included in UNESCO’s (2006) EFA index analysis.

<sup>9</sup>Recommendations by the Commission’s report (CAFC, 2004) are considered in this examination to be “significant” if they address structural changes to the education system. Recommendations not considered “significant” include, for example, “institute mentoring programs and partnerships” (p. 97) and “establish good policies and standards for distance education” (p. 108).

<sup>10</sup>In contrast, the 9/11 Commission Report (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 2004) claims, for example, that religious schools in Pakistan “produced large numbers of half-educated young men with no marketable skills but with deeply held Islamic views” (p. 63), and the Commission advocates for public, secular schools in Islamic countries because religious schools promote intolerance and radicalism.

<sup>11</sup>Cuba’s incarceration rate is estimated to be the eighth highest in the world at 487 imprisoned persons per 100,000 residents (Walmsley, 2005).

<sup>12</sup>The U.S. embargo against Cuba was instituted in 1962 after Cuba nationalized U.S. holdings. Still in effect after 45 years, the embargo receives considerable international criticism, including 16 consecutive resolutions by the United Nations General Assembly to end the embargo. In 2007, for example, 184 countries voted in support of the resolution to end the U.S. embargo against Cuba, with only 4 countries in opposition to the resolution (United Nations, 2007).



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