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Global Education: The Caribbean Realm

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Global Education: The Caribbean Realm

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William Honors College Research Project

Spring 2021

The University of Akron

ABSTRACT

This paper will explore the educational systems of four countries in the Caribbean region, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Jamaica, referenced as the focus countries. This will also compare these educational systems to the education system of the United States. In addition, this paper will also show a pilot research study conducted to evaluate how Americans view these four countries in the Caribbean realm and what they know about education in other countries as a whole, showing that Americans know very little about education in other parts of the world, and no even less about countries in the Caribbean realm.

Keywords: *Haiti, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Jamaica, educational systems, disadvantage, corruption, prestige*

INTRODUCTION

Using inspiration from a trip to Haiti, as well as limited personal knowledge on education in the Caribbean realm, a pilot research study was conducted to learn of others' knowledge about education in the Caribbean realm with four countries being of focus: Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Jamaica. The four focus countries were chosen based upon these being the four most populous countries within the Caribbean region.

After the initial internal research study was completed and the results were analyzed, it became evident that having any knowledge about education (or really much knowledge at all) in and about the focus countries was lacking. The next step was taken to find external research about the four focus countries and how the educational system works in each of these countries.

The purpose of this paper is to inform others, specifically future educators, on the lacking knowledge that Americans have of the Caribbean realm, and more importantly, what these educational systems truly look like. Therefore, the question in which will drive the research conducted will be: How much knowledge do Americans possess on the educational systems of the four most populous Caribbean countries, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Jamaica? The need for this study is related to the need to globalize social studies education in the K-12. According to Merryfield, "outcomes of globalization are changing what young people need to know and be able to do in order to be effective, engaged citizens" (Merryfield, 2008). As K-12 social studies education in America expands to help students learn more about the world around them, students can become much more culturally aware and therefore become better upstanding, engaged citizens within today's society. Students can become more globally interconnected, leading our future generations to care more deeply about the world around us and how everything is connected. This can also lead to better global change socially, politically, and

economically because if students are better aware of the world around them due to their curriculum in the classroom, they should be more interested in instilling change as adults (Merryfield, 2008).

RESEARCH STUDY

A convenient sample of 56 American people from Ohio between the ages of 16-54, acquired from the followers of my social media platform, Instagram, were surveyed regarding their knowledge and beliefs on education in other countries, as well as their perception of the focus countries of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Jamaica. The survey from the research study included 11 questions, which included ranking the four focus countries, plus the United States, on which they believed to have the best educational quality, how much they knew about the four focus countries (education or otherwise), open ended questions about what came to mind when they thought about the four focus countries, rating their knowledge about education in other countries, and which region of the world they knew the most about regarding education. A copy of the survey is shown in Figure 1 below. The survey, as well as the external research, included the comparison of the United States' educational system due to the intended audience of this paper being American educators. This survey was conducted through the University of Akron's survey software system, Qualtrics, and was completed anonymously, with age and general location of response (Ohio) being the only demographic factors collected from survey participants.

Figure 1

Survey Questions (first half on left, second half on right)

How much do you know about education in other countries besides the US?

- ☐ A great deal
☐ A lot
☐ A moderate amount
☐ A little
☐ None at all

If you know anything about education in other countries, which region do you know the most about?

- ☐ North America (Canada, Mexico)
☐ Asia
☐ Europe
☐ Australia
☐ South America
☐ Caribbean region (Haiti, Jamaica, DR, Cuba)
☐ I do not know anything about education in other countries

How much do you know about Haiti (education or otherwise)

- ☐ A great deal
☐ A lot
☐ A moderate amount
☐ A little
☐ None at all

How much do you know about Jamaica (education or otherwise)

- ☐ A great deal
☐ A lot
☐ A moderate amount
☐ A little
☐ None at all

How much do you know about the Dominican Republic (education or otherwise)

- ☐ A great deal
☐ A lot
☐ A moderate amount
☐ A little
☐ None at all

How much do you know about Cuba (education or otherwise)

- ☐ A great deal
☐ A lot
☐ A moderate amount
☐ A little
☐ None at all

When you think of Haiti, what comes to mind?

When you think of Jamaica, what comes to mind?

When you think of the Dominican Republic, what comes to mind?

When you think of Cuba, what comes to mind?

Rank the countries in order based on educational quality (your beliefs) 1 is the best, 5 is the worst

- United States
 Haiti
 Jamaica
 Dominican Republic
 Cuba

What is your age?

- ☐ under 18
☐ 18 - 24
☐ 25 - 34
☐ 35 - 44
☐ 45 - 54
☐ 55 - 64
☐ 65 - 74
☐ 75 - 84
☐ 85 or older



RESULTS

The results of the survey showed many different factors. First, out of the 56 people who were surveyed, only 11 participants (less than 20%) answered that they knew anything more than “a little”, when asked about how much they knew about education in other countries.

Additionally, for those that knew anything about education in other countries besides the United States, 40% (the largest margin) of participants answered that they knew the most about the European region of the world in terms of education, with zero participants answering that they knew the most about the Caribbean region, which would include the four focus countries.

Furthermore, for each of the four focus countries, 65-81% of survey participants answered that they knew nothing about the countries, education or otherwise, 65% for Haiti, 76% for the Dominican Republic, 80% for Cuba, and 81% for Jamaica. Zero participants answered that they knew anything more than “a moderate amount” for Haiti, Cuba, and Jamaica, with one participant answering that they knew “a lot” about the Dominican Republic. Figures 2-5, shown below, show a more detailed view of the participant’s responses, provided by Qualtrics.

Figure 2

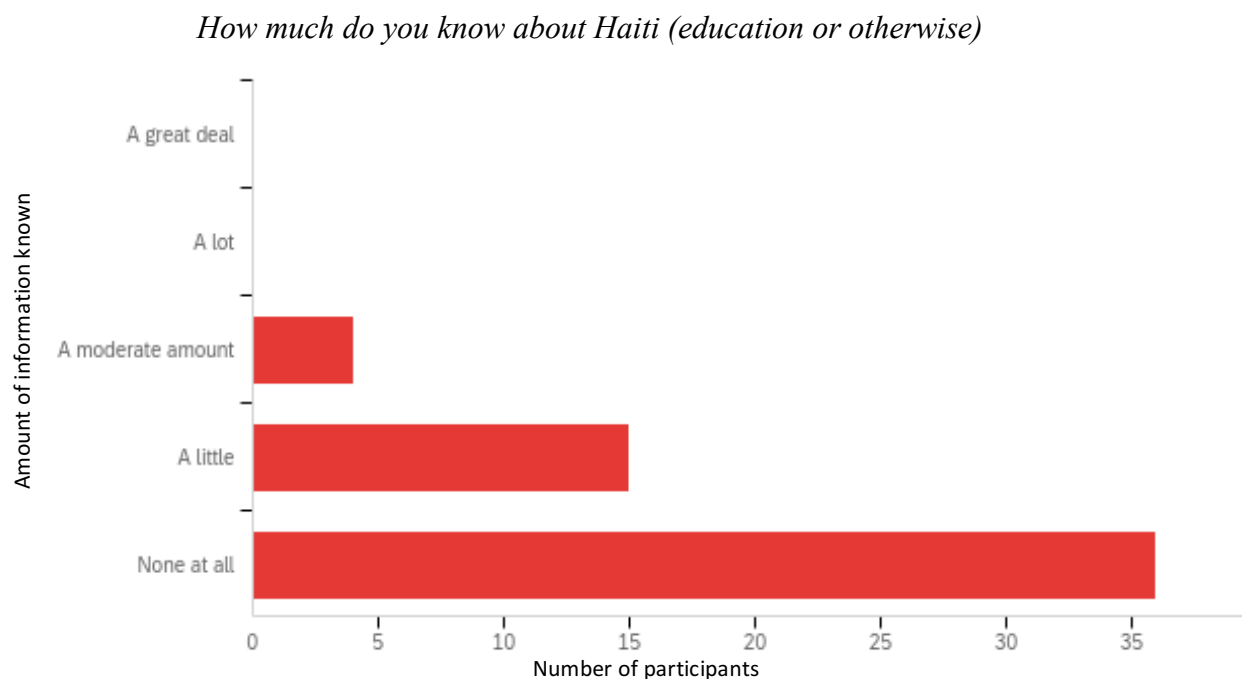


Figure 3

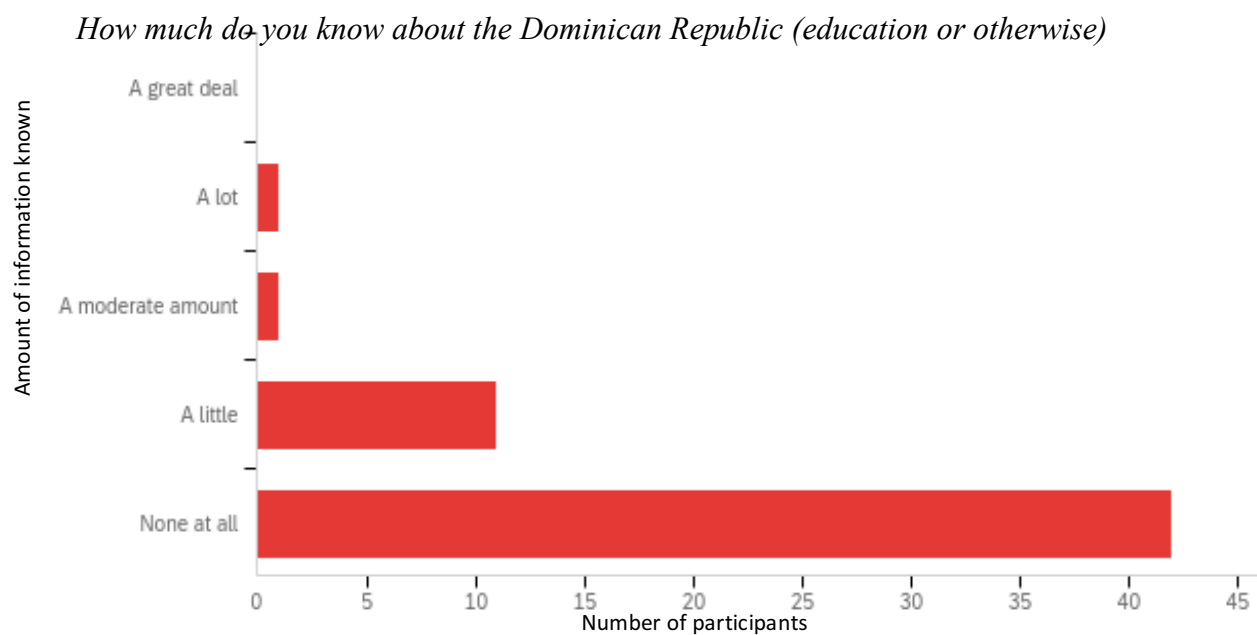


Figure 4

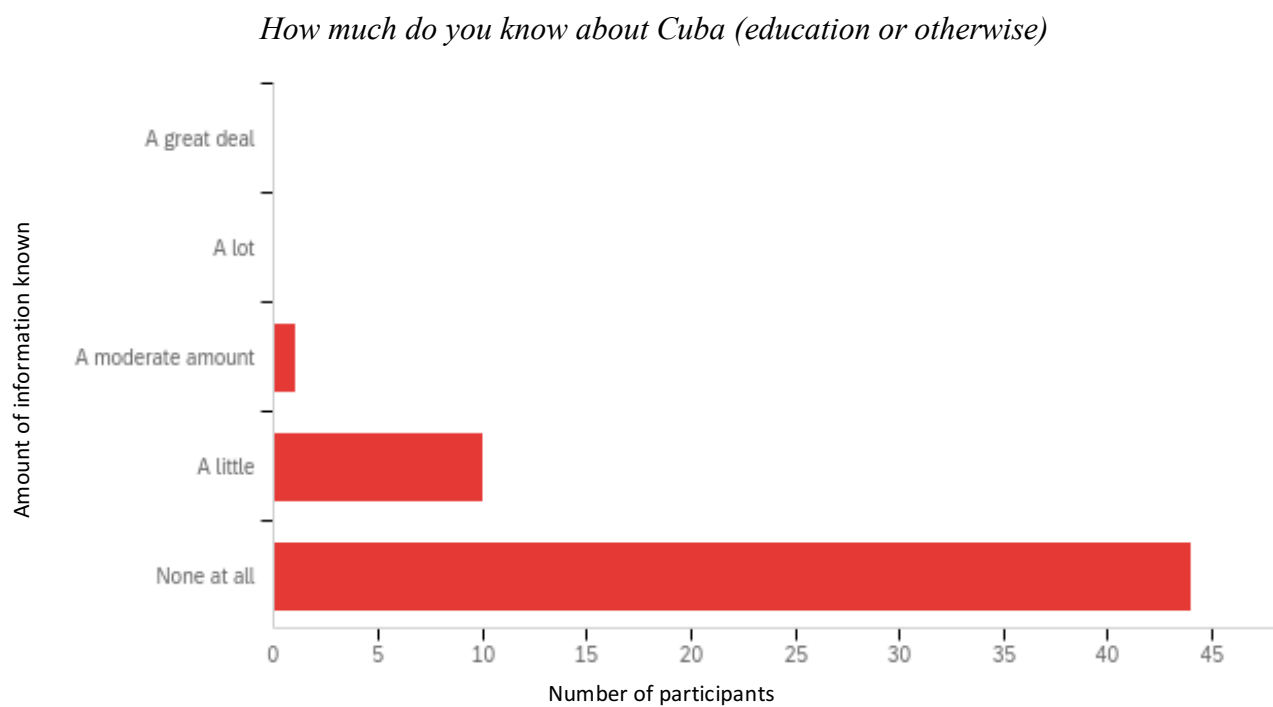
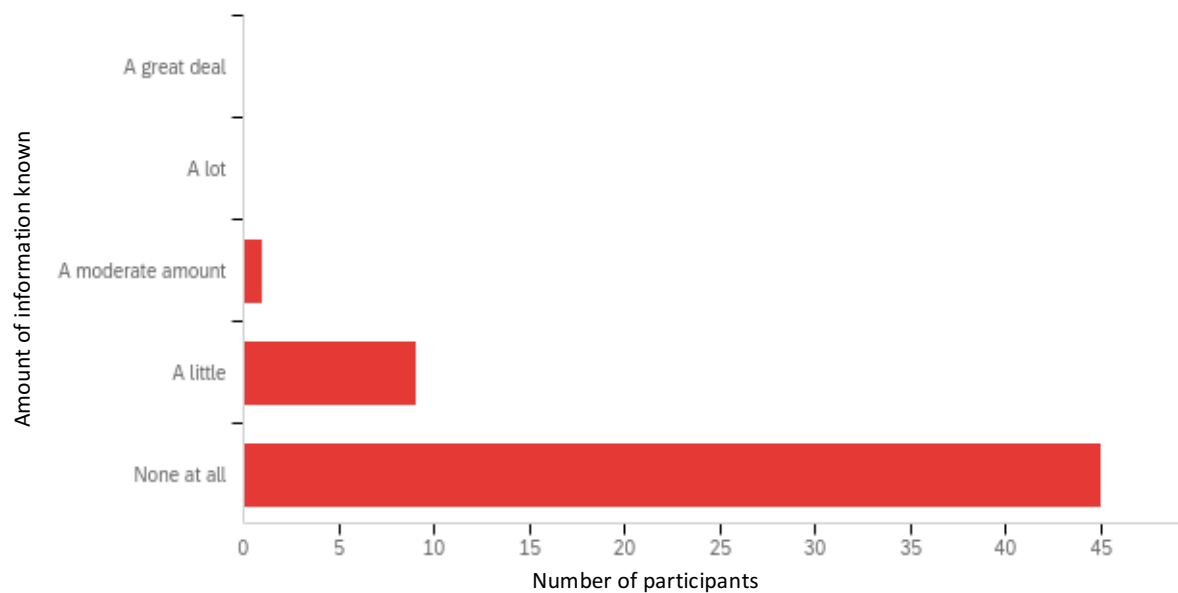


Figure 5

How much do you know about Jamaica (education or otherwise)



Survey results also showed that the perception participants had about the four focus countries was very stereotypical and some responses were very negative. The most common responses for Haiti when asked what came to mind were earthquakes, hurricanes, and poverty. The most common responses for the Dominican Republic when asked what came to mind were vacation, beaches, baseball, and drugs. The most common responses for Cuba when asked what came to mind was drugs, cigars, communism, and dictatorship. The most common responses for Jamaica when asked what came to mind was vacation, beaches, and drugs. From all of these responses, it's obvious that the majority of survey participants do not know much about these countries in the Caribbean realm, and specifically, if the majority of people think of these countries as tourist destinations, they don't think of these countries as places where people actually live and children actually go to school.

Lastly, the results showed that survey participants felt that out of the four focus countries plus the United States, the United States has the best educational quality, followed in order by Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and last, Haiti.

As a result of these survey responses, it is obvious that there is not much knowledge surrounding the four focus countries and specifically the educational systems in these countries. Therefore, this statement is what will drive the following research, to inform on the educational systems of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Jamaica.

COLONIALISM

Before diving deeper into each of the focus countries' current educational systems, it is important to acknowledge why each country's system might be the way that it is. Education in the Caribbean is still being affected today because of the colonization of this region back in the 1400s. Schools were originally set up in the Caribbean to serve only white, slave owners who colonized the region from Europe (Brissett, 2018). This made education a luxury and symbol of prestige, as enslaved Black people were unable to access an education. However, even after these countries gained independence from their European colonizers, the new political leaders now running the educational systems, continued to discriminate on the basis of demographic factors such as skin shade, rather than race itself, and also, socio-economic status (Brissett, 2018). This meant that education continued to be only for the elite. Additionally, even for those who can receive an education, the curriculum within the schools is still almost completely rooted in colonialism, as many times the curriculum written for these schools comes from their European colonizers, for Haiti, France, for the Dominican Republic and Cuba, Spain, and for Jamaica, England. Because of this, Brissett states, "[the curriculum] therefore lacked relevance to regional, national, and local realities, and needs" (Brissett, 2018). This show that citizens

receiving an education in these countries are quite deprived of the actual knowledge they need of their own country to be able to become better citizens, acknowledge the depth of their history, and therefore learn how to help their own region and build better futures for themselves. The topic of colonialism in the Caribbean, and specifically its impact on education, is much greater and deeper, and would require much more research than just what is stated in a section of this research paper. For the purpose of this paper, the realm of this specific topic is shown in a much more limited scope, however further inquiry and research into this topic will be conducted in future projects.

HAITI

The country of Haiti is one of the two countries on the island of Hispaniola located between the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. The educational system in Haiti is a very broken system, full of unfulfilled promises and corrupt politicians. Although Haiti's constitution states that all people will receive a free, public education (Lunde, 2011), getting to go to school continues to be a luxury that only some will ever receive (Franz, 2011). Although 67% of children in Haiti will enroll in school at some point during their childhood, only 30% of that 67% will ever move further than third grade (Wolff, 2009). A lot of this comes from the fact that although the government promises free education for all, only 10% of the country's yearly federal budget goes to education (Ell, 2010). This makes public schools in Haiti extremely underfunded and the schooling facilities very inadequate and unequipped to truly educate the children of Haiti in a way that would actually be practical and worth even the small amount of money that is put into the education system.

In Haiti, literacy is a symbol of prestige in society. Because so many people do not make it to even third grade, the literacy rate is only about 60%. This is far under the average literacy

rate for Latin American and Caribbean countries of over 90% (*The World Factbook*, 2021), and puts Haiti at the lowest educational rate in the entire Western hemisphere (*Haiti Country Profile*, 2015). Even for those children who do make it past third grade, the ages in grades are extremely skewed. Instead of children moving through the grade levels together, with almost all children being of the same age in each grade, children start school at all different ages and their schooling may not be so linear. This means that all ages of students could be in any grade level, since they are placed based on ability and what grades they have already finished, not based on age. Many students do not even start first grade until age 10, even though the mandated age is 6 years old, making older students, who one would expect to be in high school, be in grades 5 or 6, if they are even lucky enough to make it that far (Demombynes, et al., 2012). Additionally, with natural disasters, such as the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti, thousands of students were displaced, and schools were destroyed (*Haiti Country Profile*, 2015). This put a pause on education for the majority of Haitian students, putting those in school even farther behind, or forcing them to drop out altogether and either never return, or return years later, to the grade where they left off.

Because public schools in Haiti are so underfunded and have so few students who can actually make it through, even just the elementary school levels, private schools have been a driving force for any type of education in Haiti. Actually, about 80% of total enrollment in schools in Haiti come from private institutions (Wolff, 2009). Although, something that goes along with private education is cost, which makes education even more of a luxury. According to Wolff, the majority of these private schools are for-profit, and run by entrepreneurs that typically care more about the money they are making, than the quality of education they are providing to their “customers”. And again, because of the hefty cost involved in attending one of these private schools, the number of Haitians that are even able to access an education like this, is very low.

Wolff also states that nearly 75% of private schools operate with no license or certifications.

There are no standards that need met, nor education that the teachers need to be able to be employed by these for-profit private schools, making the educational system in Haiti even more corrupt. Another huge disadvantage for education in Haiti is that the curriculum received by Haitian schools is typically written in French, where the majority of people in Haiti speak Creole. The curriculum is typically written by French speaking people in either France or Canada. This makes the curriculum extremely difficult for the teachers that only speak Creole to teach and for the students who only speak Creole to learn (Lunde, 2009).

The educational system in Haiti is actually very similar to the United States in terms of grade levels. Education starts at the preschool level and then moves through 9 grade levels after preschool before reaching secondary school, which would be comparable to the United States version of high school. Again though, so few students even make it past third grade, even though education for children between the ages 6 and 11 is compulsory, this is in no way actually monitored or enforced. According to Suzata, 92% of elementary schools in Haiti are private and on average, tuition can cost about 20,276 gourdes, or \$250 USD, which is a huge percentage of the average per capita income in Haiti of \$350 USD. Of those that make it through elementary school, just 22% will move on to secondary school, and then only 1% will ever be able to receive a college education, attending a higher education institution.

Overall, the educational system in Haiti is very corrupt and typically only accessible to a very select percentage of the total population. According to Lunde, students in Haiti wear their school uniforms with pride. Families know that a school uniform is a symbol of luxury, showing that they are privileged enough to be able to afford an education, and a private education at that. With so many disadvantages, such as underpaid/undertrained teachers, little to no federal

funding, high tuition costs, inadequate facilities, limited access to public schools, and high dropout rates, Haitians still dream of receiving a fair education for all. Although many do not have this privilege, or will never have this privilege, education is still looked to be extremely important in Haiti and seen as a symbol of prestige and riches. And truly, out of the four focus countries, the responses about Haiti from the survey are arguably the most accurate in terms of educational quality, poverty, and corruption. Although there is much more to this country in terms of education, amongst other factors, survey respondents really were not too far off the mark on their judgement of Haiti.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

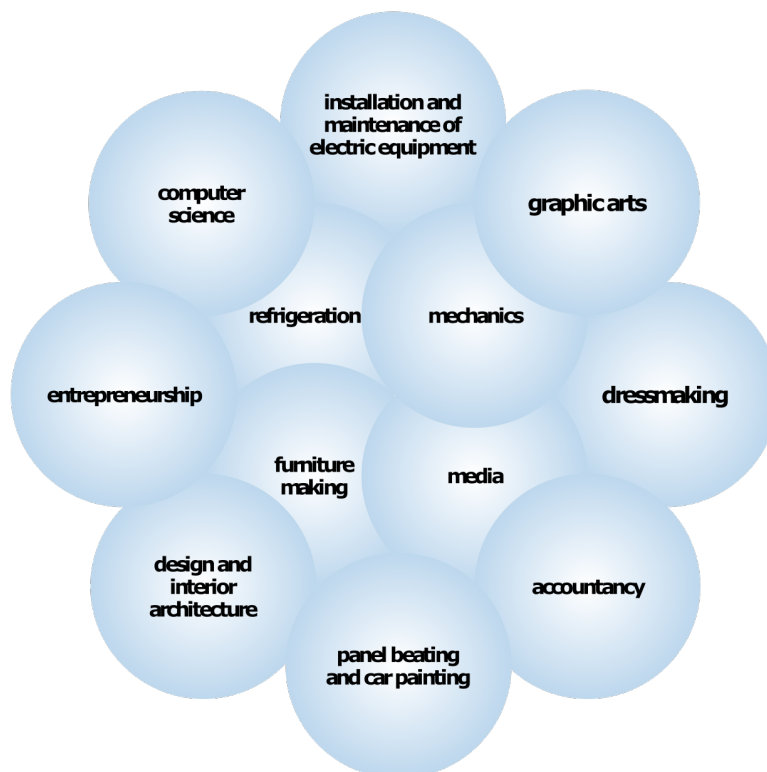
The Dominican Republic is the other country on the island of Hispaniola, shared by Haiti. The primary language spoken in the Dominican Republic is Spanish and the literacy rate is much closer to that of the United States than Haiti's with a literacy rate in the Dominican Republic of 91.8%. Compulsory education is mandated from ages 6-14 or grade level equivalent of first through eighth grade, which is considered primary school. Much different from Haiti's educational system, these grade levels are actually enforced that children attend, and not as much of a luxury or privilege as it is in Haiti. Because it is compulsory and mandated by the government, it is also funded by the government. Also, similar to the United States, classes are held from mid-August to mid-December with a break for Christmas, and then mid-January to mid-June, with an eight-week long break for summer. Additionally, classes are held Monday through Friday (Macready, 2008). Furthermore, schools in the Dominican Republic also provide Special Education services to those who qualify and offer accommodations to make public education more accessible, even to those with disabilities. However, not mandated is secondary school. Secondary school has four levels, 1-4, and is optional for children in the Dominican

Republic. Although, this schooling is also provided by the government without tuition costs for residents. The first two years of secondary school in the Dominican Republic includes subject area academia similar to that of elementary school. However, the second two years of secondary school includes subject areas specific to the student's desire for vocational training and career prep (Macready, 2008). Secondary school also includes two separate tracks for vocational training, one track including agricultural learning, industrial training, and other career training, whereas the other track focuses more on the arts, inhibiting the student's creativity and specializing in subject areas including the visual arts, performing arts, or music. A full graphic of the specialty areas in the Dominican Republic's secondary schools is shown in Figure 6, provided by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization in 2018.

Figure 6

Specialty Areas in Dominican Republic Secondary Schools

Areas



Source: UNESCO

And actually, to graduate from a secondary school in the Dominican Republic could arguably be more difficult than graduating high school in the United States. To be able to graduate, students must not only complete coursework and pass their classes, but they also must pass national exams as well as complete a certain number of community service hours, proving their dedication to their education (Macready, 2008).

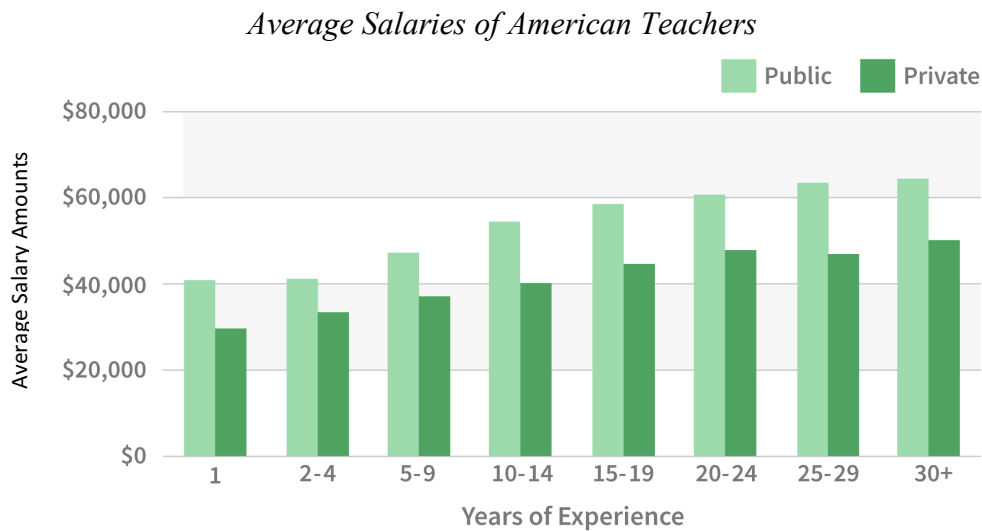
Although, primary school is mandated and enforced, attendance in school proves to be an issue. Only 52% of students actually pass all the way through primary school to eighth grade, and the majority of this is due to attendance issues. Attendance issues are fueled by some students having to travel very far distances to reach their schools (*Boys and Girls of School-Going Age*, 2014). Additionally, for students enrolled in secondary school, attendance proves to be an issue due to ongoing struggles with students getting involved with drugs and alcohol. Although, according to De Tavarez and Andrade, the higher the socioeconomic status of a person in the Dominican Republic, the less likely they are to get themselves involved with drug and alcohol. Education plays a big part of this, since a person's socioeconomic status on average increases with an education. However, many students do not finish their education because of the presence of drugs and alcohol (De Tavarez and Andrade, 2013).

There are also many issues in both primary and secondary school due to school conditions. Although over the past several years, school conditions have improved, according to Manning, conditions used to be very bleak and contributed to a failing educational system (Manning 2014). Not only are physical buildings crumbling, having many damages, especially in part by natural disasters, schools in the Dominican Republic also lack resources like textbooks, and schools are also very overcrowded because of how small school buildings are. Private schools typically have better school building infrastructure, as well as more instructional

resources to build better curriculums (Macready 2008), however again, just like in Haiti, and in the United States, private school comes with high tuition costs and is not accessible to all.

Differing from the United States, however, teachers in private schools are actually paid a higher salary, whereas typically in the United States, public school teachers are paid more, which is emphasized and shown below in Figure 7, provided by Niche in 2019.

Figure 7



Similar to Haiti, however, teachers are not required to obtain any type of certification prior to being employed. Most teachers have no prior classroom experience before obtaining their first classroom job. However, there are training programs for teachers and some do get certified, it is just not required in the Dominican Republic (Sucre and Fiszbein, 2015).

Overall, education in the Dominican Republic is arguably much better than the educational system in Haiti. The system in the Dominican Republic has proven to be much less corrupt and much more accessible to all students throughout the country. It has shown to be much less of a luxury, and much more similar to the mandated, compulsory educational system of the United States. The education quality is not up to par with the quality in the United States,

which does reinforce the results of the survey, however is much better than its island of Hispaniola counterpart.

CUBA

Cuba is a country just south of the United States, just about 100 miles south of Florida. Education in Cuba is much stricter than the countries already mentioned, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and fits much closer to the educational system created by the United States. However, what's different about Cuba than the United States, is that much of this strict educational system stems from the dictatorship political system that has ruled Cuba for the last almost 70 years (Lakhani, 2010). Cuba's literacy rate is just about at 100%, which ranks among the highest within Latin American countries (Schugurensky, 2010) and again is because of its strict educational system. Schooling in Cuba is compulsory from ages 6-16, with less than 1% of Cuban children dropping out of primary school (Mandrappa, 2015) and each student is required to wear a uniform, where the color of the uniform indicates grade level. Class sizes are no larger than 25 students per class in primary school (Lakhani, 2010), with a student to teacher ratio of just 12:1 (Schugurensky, 2010). The length of the school day, however is much longer than that of the United States. Most school buildings open at 6:30 am and are open for 12 hours. Though all of this time may not be focusing on instruction, school children come to school for free before and after school care, while parents work, as well as for free breakfast and lunch. The actual instructional period only lasts for four hours, while the rest of the time is used for free play, extended creative curriculum, and sports (Mandrappa, 2015).

Within the compulsory primary school education, students learn a variety of subjects in the mandated curriculum. This includes, not only typical academic subject areas like math, science, Spanish (the national language), and history, but also subjects that are used to expand

the Cuban student's mind, like dance, gardening, health and hygiene, and wood and metal crafts. Similar to that of the Dominican Republic, secondary school is used for career prep and vocational training, allowing students to dive deeper into curriculum that is designed to serve as technical or professional training. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, students in secondary school can opt out of the technical vocational training and instead stay with the typical academia, for pre-university training, preparing students for college (Cuba – Education System, UNESCO).

Cuba's educational system does not just end when the school day ends, however. Many teachers are involved in community life, and in fact, according to Gasperini, "Teachers act as community activists and are involved in activities such as parents' education and similar activities that have a positive impact on children's education. Teachers help plan school life. They spend about 80 percent of their time with students at school and the rest of their time in student's homes" (Gasperini, 2000). She also writes that this adheres to Cuba's educational principle that "education is a shared responsibility" as it does not all fall onto the responsibility of the student, that the work and responsibility is shared between the teacher, the student, and the student's family (Gasperini, 2000).

Although Gasperini makes teachers seem like superheroes with their involvement going far beyond the typical school day, since about 2010, Cuba has been struggling with a huge shortage of teachers due to very low teacher salary rates. Although according to Blum and Dawley-Carr, a much larger percentage of the federal budget goes to schools in Cuba annually than in previously mentioned Haiti, 23% in Cuba, compared to 10% in Haiti, teachers continue to be underpaid and choose to seek careers elsewhere in order to make more money (Dawley-Carr, 2016). Teachers in Cuba also haven chosen to leave the profession and new graduates choose to

not go into the profession due to other factors beyond low pay as well. Some of these factors have included large work load, particularly the work load outside of school hours (12 or more hour work days), as well as lack of adequate facilities and resources. Some classrooms in Cuba continue to not even have basic resources like electricity and water, while the government seems to be more concerned with putting technology in the classrooms, using allocated funds to purchase computers, instead of adding to teacher's salaries and providing basic resources, (Dawley-Carr, 2016). In addition to low wages, teachers also receive no employment benefits, which does not make it a very sought-after career compared to other professions that do offer employment benefits.

Overall, Cuba's educational system ranks much higher than other Latin American countries and could even be compared to countries like the United States and China. Although this system's quality has ranked highly because of its very strict government and dictatorship political system, schoolchildren are taught to behave and value education from a very young age, creating a high literacy rate, high test scores, and low drop outs rates. Although other countries may perceive Cuba as a leader in education amongst the Latin American countries, there is definitely more going on in the inside, such as strict practices, mistreatment of teachers, and inadequate schooling facilities that may not always be seen by other countries, which may very well deplete Cuba's educational quality.

JAMAICA

The country of Jamaica is a small island in the Caribbean Sea, south of Cuba and just west of the island of Hispaniola, where Haiti and the Dominican Republic are located. Jamaica has a literacy rate of 88%, which is much greater than the literacy rate of Haiti, but just under that of the Dominican Republic, and about 10% under that of Cuba and the United States.

Jamaica's educational system is built of four main structures, beginning with early childhood education, then primary education, followed by secondary education, and finally tertiary education. Compulsory education does not begin until primary school however, as early childhood education is for ages 1-6, prior to typical school age. Primary school is for ages 6-12, which again are the ages that school is compulsory and is free (Jamaica Ministry of Education, 2014). As for subject areas, the beginning grades of primary school (first through third grade) focus on Spanish, computer studies, physical education, arts and crafts, and religious studies. This differs from the upper grades in primary school, beginning in fourth grade when focuses turn to subjects like math, English, social studies, science, and communication (Jamaica Ministry of Education, 2014). Primary school is actually a very stressful time for Jamaican school children due to rigorous workloads including hours of homework each night and large national exams that all students must pass. Students are trained in the subject areas that make up the exams and are taught to the test, so that students can score high and the primary school can be deemed a "Sought After Primary School" in Jamaica. Students also must pass these exams in order to move on to the next grade (Jamaica Ministry of Education, 2014)

After primary school, Jamaican students have the option to attend secondary school which is divided up into three sections, lower school, upper school, and sixth form. Lower school includes what is called forms 1-3 or grades 7-9. During lower school, students take Spanish, French, science, English, and math. Upper school includes what is called forms 4 and 5, or grades 10 and 11. Upper school gets more specific with subject areas and includes sciences like physics and chemistry, in addition to math, English, history, a choice of a foreign language, and students can also choose to take business courses, technology courses, or courses within the arts, according to the Caribbean Examinations Council. After finishing upper school and passing the

Caribbean Examinations to graduate, students can choose to move on to sixth form, which includes significantly harder course load material and can be compared to university level classes (Jamaica Ministry of Education, 2014).

Overall, Jamaica's educational systems seems a lot more rigorous than one might think and a lot more rigorous than the other focus countries. Jamaica's educational system actually seems to compare the most to the United States and their national testing system. In the United States, each state has their own testing system, which scores evaluate student, teacher, and school performance, very similarly to the tests given to Jamaican students.

MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

In January of 2020, I had the opportunity to travel to Cap-Haitian, Haiti with the University of Akron student organization, Zips for Haiti. While there, we worked with the Haitian organization, Streethearts, a program for orphaned boys to have a place to live, a placement in school, and eventually training to get a job. Streethearts provided our tour group with the opportunity to tour three different schools in Cap-Haitian. Getting to tour these schools was actually the inspiration to complete my research on this topic, as well as expand this topic to other countries amongst the Caribbean realm.

When touring these schools in Cap-Haitian, there were a few things that stood out to me specifically. First, were the school uniforms. All three schools were private schools, as about 80% of total enrollment of students in Haiti come from private institutions. Students look very well kept and put together in their uniforms, and it was easy to tell that these students wore their uniforms with pride. Another significant feature of these schools was the classroom space compared to the number of students in each class. The classrooms were very small, with about 40 students in each room. Students were seated extremely close together, crammed into these

classrooms. Additionally, I could tell that there was a variety of ages in each room. As previously mentioned in my research, students are placed in grade levels depending on ability level/what grades they had already completed, meaning that various ages can be in the same classroom. I saw students who looked to be around ages 6-7 in the same class with students that looked to be around ages 13-14. This definitely stood out to me, since in the United States, students are almost always in class with students of all the same age. The last significant feature that stood out to me, is that all grade levels are contained in the same building. From grade 1 to grade 12, all classrooms are contained in one building, and the school was much smaller than a school building in the United States. I actually would have thought that if all of these grades were in the same building, that the building would be significantly bigger than a school in the United States, but that was not the case. My experience of visiting these schools was very helpful in inspiring me to complete my research on this topic and was very interesting to be able to have this opportunity to visit the schools of another country as a future educator.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it was obvious to see that through the internal research study, many people do not know much about the countries of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Jamaica, other than thoughts about drugs, poverty, vacation destinations, and tropical beaches. However, through the research conducted, these four focus countries are much more than that, and actual people live in these places and attend school there. Although through the additional research conducted, the survey respondents, were not all that wrong in their statements about factors like drugs and poverty, however the portrait of these countries just being vacation destinations with tropical beaches is most definitely a weakness, as again, this shows that the respondents do not think of these countries as places where people actually live and attend school, rather just

vacation destinations. These countries' educational systems, although all unique in their own ways, may be more similar to the educational system in the United States, than one might initially think. Additionally, through the research conducted, although there are similarities between the focus countries educational systems, compared to the United States' educational system, it was easy to see that each of the focus countries have many issues within their educational systems, that seem to all stem from monetary concerns and broken infrastructures. From social, political, and economical concerns, all four focus countries have variable issues within their educational systems, however it is easy to see that all of these countries are much more than just drug rings and destinations for tourism and vacations, but actual places where people live and attend school.

As seen, the problem before us is that there is a severe lack of knowledge about education in this region of the world. The research conducted should be used to help inform educators, as well as create better curriculum structures in American K-12 schools to be the driving force in educating our future students. In the future, as educators continue to educate themselves, I see the potential in further globalizing the K-12 social studies curriculum by adding in curriculum about the Caribbean region of the world. Just as there is specific curriculum about regions like Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas in American K-12 schools, the Caribbean realm has a place in education as well. In addition to expanding our future generation's span of knowledge within the global world, I also see stake in this new-found knowledge helping to produce viable global change, specifically for the quality of educational systems within the Caribbean realm.

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