Comparative study on Student Achievement in Latin America

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Abstract
This article aims to review the major findings of a regional comparative study on student achievement in Latin America and the Caribbean. A regional network of education evaluation systems, the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE), launched this study with the aim of gathering valid, accurate, and reliable data on academic achievement of primary school students, as well as relevant information on associated factors. Sixteen countries from this region participated in the study. Three subject areas, Mathematics, Language and Natural Science were tested. The achievements for each country are shown with a standardized score, the dispersion within countries, and the mean scores. These results show that there are significant differences in the quality of student learning between countries with the Cuban scores constantly being found at the top.

The Latin American educational world may be shocked by these results. Data confirm the existence of a positive correlation between the average scores of a given country and its per capita GDP. However, in the Cuban case, the high student performance in the context of comparative low economic development, would not be explained in this general trend. Educational policy in socialist Cuba contradicts fundamentally with the dominating neo-liberal policy in other Latin American countries. Why do students in Cuba do better in school? Some researchers have undertaken investigations to answer this interesting question.