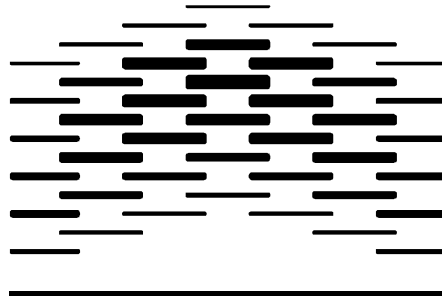


Thiago dos Reis Nascimento

Implementation of Local Knowledges in the Cuban Primary  
Educational System



OSLO AND AKERSHUS  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE  
OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Multicultural and International Education (MIE)

May 2017

Master in Multicultural and International Education  
Faculty of Education  
Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences

## **Acknowledgements**

The achievement of this study was made possible through the contributions of a couple of special people, institutions in Cuba and Norway, and above all the enhancing support of our spiritual ancestors. Thus, we take the opportunity to cordially thank those involved in the long and complex, but rewarding process of completion of this master thesis.

First of all, we thank our supervisor Anders Breidlid for the support throughout the process. Breidlid's advices and feedbacks were fundamentally essential to the achievement of this research. Second, we thank Perondo Domingo for opening the gates of the fieldwork and discussing similarities and differences between the Brazilian and the Cuban Primary School Systems. Third, we thank Afonso Cok for the methodological discussions in the fieldwork and for allowing us to make the video observations and take photographs. Fourth, we thank Lisa Skogstad and Jork Bartosz for the support in reviewing the technical details of this thesis. Finally, we thank our family for the moral support in understanding the necessity we had to be far away from home for more than two years.

About the institutions, firstly, we thank HiOA - Multicultural and International Education Master Program for exposing us to a scope of theories that enabled the theme of this study. As a Brazilian researcher we see the necessity of master programs that may challenge the hegemonic knowledge in the global South. Second, we thank the Cuban government and the Cuban Ministry of Education, in particular, the vice-minister of Education Cira Piñero for giving us the permission to conduct a delicate research with primary students. Third, we thank Lånekassen for granting us a scholarship for two years during this master program. Fourth, we thank the school staff from the Primary School Pedro Domingo Murillo for receiving us and sharing a very pleasant moment with the Cuban pupils. Last, but not least, we want to thank the Cuban people for being so welcoming.

Salvador, May 2017

Thiago Nascimento

## Abstract

This study explores the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System under the paradigm of qualitative research. Hence, we attempt to comprehend how the Cuban socialist government tried to de-alienate their Primary Educational System through the process of nationalization. Thus, we attempt to balance the knowledge production by exploring the Cuban perspective on local knowledges. Likewise, we explore to what extent are local knowledges introduced in the Cuban primary system A) Referred to as something exotic only, or B) As an alternative epistemological orientation. Finally, we discuss to what extent the Cuban Primary Educational System departs from GAE<sup>1</sup>. After analyzing our findings, we first came across that the Cuban educational authorities implemented the local knowledges as a supplement to the existing epistemology. Second, we found out that Cuban educational specialists do not recognize the implementation of local knowledges in the local Primary Educational System as an element belonging to a non-Western epistemology, rather they understand that local knowledges come from or are generated from the existing cubanized school subjects such as Spanish Language<sup>2</sup> History of Cuba, Labor Education, Civic Education, Music Education, and Artistic Education. Third, we also found out that the Cuban Primary Educational System, represented by the local State, is able to promote a sort of schooling that provides the Cuban primary pupils the embodied state of cultural capital understood by Bourdieu (1997, p. 47/48) as the knowledge and cultural background owned by the parents and family and therefore transmitted to the next generations. Finally, we perceived that the nationalization process of the Cuban educational curriculum did not manage to include the plurality of the Afro-Indigenous knowledges. For this reason, we wonder whether the Cuban Revolution was actually a popular revolution that represented the values of the whole population, since great part of the Afro-Indigenous knowledges has not been embraced in the creation of a new national culture.

### III

---

<sup>1</sup> See Jones (2007, p. 325) for understanding the global architecture of education, GAE.

<sup>2</sup> Spanish language is the official language in Cuba, however the Cuban Spanish, a local variation, is the most common dialect spoken in formal and non-formal social domains.

*“Quem não brinca junto, não luta junto”*

This an old proverb from the Tupinambá nation in Brazil that means “who does not play together, never fight together”, this idea is well known among individuals from traditional communities such as indigenous tribes and maroon communities also known as quilombos in Brazil.

## **Abbreviations**

CPES- Cuban Primary Educational System

LKs- Local Knowledges

# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	II
<b>Abstract</b> .....	III
<b>Table of contents</b> .....	VI
<b>1.0 Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>2.0 Background</b> .....	5
2.1 Education in a revolutionary society.....	5
2.2 Nationalization of the curriculum .....	8
<b>3.0 Theoretical framework</b> .....	11
3.1 Indigenous or local knowledges?.....	11
3.2 The forms of capital and the social context in Cuba .....	14
3.2a Cultural capital.....	14
3.2b Social capital.....	16
3.2c State-generated social capital vs State-generated Cultural Capital.....	16
3.3 CHAT theory and the third space in CPES.....	19
3.4 The global architecture of education.....	23
<b>4.0 Methodology</b> .....	28
4.1 Decolonizing Research.....	29
4.2 Access.....	35
4.3 Sampling.....	38
4.4 Ethical Issues.....	41
4.5 Methods for data collection.....	43
4.5a Interviews in terms of qualitative research.....	43
4.5b Participant observation.....	45
4.5c Document analysis .....	46

4.5d Reliability and validity.....	46
4.5e Short-Term Ethnography.....	48
4.6 Challenges .....	49
<b>5.0 Analysis.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>The Uniqueness of the Cuban Primary Educational System.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Part I.....</b>	<b>53</b>
5.1 The implementation of local knowledges in CPES.....	53
5.1a Cuban Spanish Language: A Cuban local language?.....	55
• Cuban Spanish language and its musicality in CPES.....	56
• Cuban Spanish language in the literary production in CPES.....	57
• Cuban Spanish Language in Theater Class in CPES.....	58
5.1b Artistic Education and the Process of 'Catación'.....	59
• Dance as a vibrant Cuban local knowledge in CPES.....	60
• Fine Arts in CPES.....	62
5.1c Cubanized school subjects.....	64
• History of Cuba subject: The importance of local history.....	64
• Civic Education subject and 'los círculos de interés' interest circles.....	67
• Labor Education subject.....	69
5.1d Critique on the absence of Afro-Indigenous LKs in CPES.....	70
5.2 How the Cuban Primary Educational System departs from GAE.....	75
<b>Part II.....</b>	<b>83</b>

5.3 The process of de-alienation through the local knowledges.....	83
5.3a Eliminating contradictions between home and school culture.....	83
5.3b The social cohesion between State (school), family, and community.....	86
5.3c The third space in the Cuban Primary Educational System.....	90
5.3d Ethnomathematics as an expression of LKs.....	92
5.3e The dilemma of ideology and the local knowledges in CPES.....	94
<b>6.0 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>7.0 Afterword.....</b>	<b>101</b>
7.1 Is Cuba also Afro-Indigenous?.....	101
7.2 Local Knowledges and the Comparative Studies.....	103
<b>8.0 References.....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>109</b>
Appendix I: Translated Letter for Fieldwork.....	110
Appendix II: Interview Guides for Fifth Grade Students.....	111
Appendix III: Interview Guides Educational Specialists - Non-teachers.....	112
Appendix IV: Interview Guides Educational Specialists – Teachers.....	114
Appendix V: Interview guide for former sub-director of Primary School.....	116
Appendix VI: Interview Guide for the Parents’ Council President.....	117
Appendix VII: Work Schedule for data collection.....	119
Appendix VIII: Letter for the Cuban Ministry of Education .....	120
Appendix IX – Personal communication .....	122



## 1.0 Introduction

Soon after the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Castro's regime started a process of nationalization<sup>1</sup> and political consolidation of a socialist society which had an educational reform as its cornerstone throughout the Caribbean island. Such a revolution took the country to be worldwide known for its education system, which still seems to be a reference for the world, in particular, for countries of the global South. Since the Revolution, Cuba has been going through a lot of reforms in its Educational System, particularly, the Primary one. Among those reforms, the implementation of "local knowledges"<sup>2</sup> in the Cuban Primary Educational System will be highlighted in this thesis.

Throughout this study, we make use of the personal pronoun "we", instead of "I" in order to affirm our Afro-Indigenous background. Among us, there is the understanding of never being alone due to the spiritual presence of our ancestors and what the West has named God. For instance, according to Evans-Pritchard (1956, p. 107), about the Nuer religion, there is no distinction between "I" sharply defined individuality in relation to God as well as the spirits of ancestors or "we". There is simply one thing which is the refractions of our own Being represented by our ancestral spirits and God. Indeed, this is a typical concept for African ontology and epistemology that may change significantly the construction of knowledges in sciences in relation to the West.

This study was initially designed to be a comparative work, however the complexity of the Cuban context and the rich data collected during the fieldwork in the investigated school in Havana did not enable us to fulfill our initial project. In line with Kubow and Fossum (2007, p. 5), we understand that the comparative study may broaden one's perspective and enable education experts to increase and deepen their understanding of a specific educational issue such as the implementation of local knowledges in the Primary School System. For this reason, a comparative work between Brazil and Cuba on the implementation of local knowledges shall be performed at a later time. In the conclusion chapter, we explain in details the relevance of researching and comparing two or three different educational contexts. Possibly, we shall include Norway in the next study. For, we understand that it is time for Western societies to be researched by southern researchers in an attempt to balance and invert

---

<sup>1</sup> For Definition of the Cuban Process of Nationalization See Section 2.2.

<sup>2</sup> I use the word "knowledges" when I refer to the local cultural manifestations from Cuba. In other moments, I use the word "knowledge" to refer to the Western epistemology.

roles in the production of knowledges.

In this study, we explore the exposure of Cuban primary pupils to the local cultural manifestations, local knowledges, in school. Hence, it is relevant for this study to present its objectives and research questions. In relation to the former, we have decided to explore the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System, likewise we try to comprehend how the Cuban socialist government tried to de-alienate their Primary Educational System through the process of nationalization. The latter brings the following questions; first, to what extent are local knowledges introduced in the primary system in Cuba? a) if it is referred to as something exotic only, or b) as an alternative epistemological orientation; second, what are local knowledges according to the Cuban perspective?; finally, to what extent does the global architecture of education, GAE<sup>3</sup>, influence the Cuban ideology on education?

This thesis is the result of a two and a half years research on the unique and complex Cuban Primary Educational System. Thus, the motivation to perform this study is entirely connected to our background and experiences as an Afro-Indigenous student from Brazil. Indeed, it indicates our Pan Africanist principles to resist colonialism and imperialism, but before that we fight racism. In line with Fanon (1963, p. 160) we understand that at the moment when the native intellectuals are trying to create a cultural work she or he fails to realize that they are utilizing techniques and language which are borrowed from the West. Conscious of that, we have tried to decolonize this research fundamentally, nevertheless the result of this research had to be presented in an academic Western way. Consequently, we accept that the format of this study is a bit unusual, however we hope that the points have been clearly put across, since we have written from an Afro-indigenous point of view.

The interest for Cuba and their socialist revolution started when we first realized the exploitation of colored people around the world, specially, blacks in the process of diaspora. Such exploitation had been endorsed by liberal ideas that aimed to maintain the status quo established in capitalistic countries of the world. Soon, we got engaged in the fight against Imperialism and therefore supported the Cuban Revolution as any other Afro-centered researcher. An effective and functional educational system for the poor and in particular for the blacks and indigenous was then the cornerstone of our revolutionary thoughts. Cuba had then become a reference for those young Afro-Indigenous students who longed to see a

---

<sup>3</sup> See Jones (2007, p. 325) for understanding the global architecture of education, GAE.

structural change in our own countries through education. The fact that a poor Latin American country could be so successful in international tests carried by UNESCO was at least a matter of investigation for us.

As a master student at the MIE Program at HIOA, we had the chance to be exposed to a bunch of literature works about education in Cuba. Hence, conscious of the alien education we have been through in our home country, Brazil, we decided to investigate to what extent and how the Cuban educational authorities managed to de-alienate the local Primary System. For that, we made use of a Marxist method found in the book *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* published in 1904. Even though, we made use of a Marxist method, we do not identify ourselves as Marxists. Actually, we understand that the Marxist method is just part of an approach chosen to perform this study. In line with the principle of culturally preferred pedagogy as found in Kaupapa Maori approach discussed by Smith (1999), we therefore extend it to culturally preferred literature which emphasizes our independence in choosing the literature that is first inherent to our background, as well as the ones we may understand as less alien to our people.

As presented above, the Marxist method is an alien theory for researchers from the global South, because it primarily fits the European context. Along with the Western methods found in this study i.e. Marxist method, we highlight the use of a local method designed by a Brazilian educator, “etnopesquisa aplicada”, translated to English as involved ethno-research, from Macedo (2012). The adoption of a method from a Southern thinker is also an attempt to decolonize this research. Interestingly, we were not able to adopt a local Cuban approach, since the Cuban regime has established Marxism-Leninism as the main philosophy in the island. Nevertheless, we problematize the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System by bringing the thoughts of the Cuban political scientist Carlos Moore (2015) who has been denouncing what himself called ‘institutionalized racism’ in the Cuban revolution and consequently in the Cuban Educational System.

This study aims to contribute to the field of local knowledges, in particular, we investigate the epistemological basis of the Cuban Primary Educational System. In line with Brock-Utne (1996, p. 618), we understand that to ensure a high ecological validity of this research, it is necessary to give as much information as possible about the school in question. Therefore, we understand that the revelation of the school name as well as the name of the informants raise the reliability of the study and the authenticity of the Cuban Primary

Educational System in implementing local knowledges. Indeed, the only restriction is about the names of the fifth grade students interviewed during the fieldwork due to their ages. Brock-Utne affirms that “In a autobiographical approach, as in a case-study approach, anonymity will be hard to uphold” (p. 618). We understand that the lack of anonymity in this case study fits the Cuban government will to display their socialist education for the world. Likewise we do not intend to bring any harm to the community researched, rather problematize the implementation of local knowledges. Furthermore, it does not contradict the principle of informed consent as discussed in Cohen et al. (2011, p. 77).

This thesis is structured in six main chapters and an afterword. First, in the introduction, we dedicate some words to present the rationale of this study, likewise we state the gaps and limitations. Second, the background, this chapter aims to contextualize the Cuban Primary Educational System. Third, the theoretical framework chapter aims to describe the scope of theories that enabled the investigation about the implementation of local knowledges in CPES. We highlight the importance of contrasting and therefore problematizing the definition of local and indigenous knowledges. Fourth, the methodology chapter presents the methodological approach of the study. Fifth, the analysis chapter explores the findings from the semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and video-observations through the lenses of the chosen scope of theories. Finally, in the conclusion chapter, we discuss the relevance of exposing primary pupils to local knowledges in CPES.

In the afterword chapter, we reaffirm the importance of recognizing and therefore implementing the plurality of Afro-Indigenous local knowledges in CPES. For that, we bring Capoeira Angola from Brazil as an example of a full status local knowledge. Furthermore, we express our will to perform later researches in the field of comparative studies focusing on the implementation of local knowledges in Brazil, Cuba, and Norway.

## **2.0 Background**

The purpose of this chapter is to pave the way for a later discussion on the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System. First, this chapter describes the period before and after the socialist revolution in 1959 in order to give an overview of the situational context of education in Cuba. Second, we describe the process of nationalization also known as “cubanization” that led Cuba to be a unique Primary School System in Latin America. In addition to that, in line with Matthews (1970, p. 342), we understand that the Cuban revolution was indeed Fidel’s revolution and therefore we highlight his influence in the process of cubanization.

### **2.1 Education in a revolutionary society**

The Cuban Educational System is in general well known as being the best in Latin America, if not in the global South. Such a statement brings the necessity of an investigation in order to comprehend at least why, how, and on what such a statement has been based on. It is a fact that the socialist government under the command of Fidel Castro has been entirely committed to offer education for all Cuban citizens despite of age, religious beliefs, and race. Nevertheless, there is controversy regarding the issue race as Moore (2015) denounces the institutionalized racism in his book called *Pichón*.

According to Cruz (2015, p. 195), after the triumph of the Cuban revolution, the formation of educational professionals was a priority. Cruz states that the formation of professionals to assume educational positions was part of the wider social transformations implemented after the revolution. Likewise, Cruz adds that Fidel Castro understood the new government as a revolutionary one that would initiate a comprehensive reform in education to prepare the future generations. According to the Cuban history, the first revolutionary measures were meant to eradicate illiteracy from the Cuban territory. After having the mission accomplished on December 22nd of 1961, the Cuban government under the command of Fidel Castro and the behest of Che Guevara announced the “Year of Education”. By that time, the Cuban socialist government had sent literacy brigades to the countryside and rural areas of the country in order to construct schools, train new educators, and teach the peasants how to read and write. As a result, the campaign reached a remarkable literacy rate of 96% and therefore eradicating illiteracy from the Cuban territory.

Interestingly a lot is told about the period after the socialist revolution in Cuba, but for this study it is relevant to make a diachronic analysis from the period right before and after the revolution. Such an approach is necessary in order to investigate to what extent the new Cuban government under the command of Fidel Castro was actually able to lessen the alien schooling system prior to the revolution. Breidlid (2013) states that “The all-pervasise corruption of the various regime before 1959, the greed of the elite, the brutality of the police and the army, the fragility of democracy, and the neglect of the poor and marginalized all signaled a moral degeneration” (p. 146).

Furthermore, according to Cruz-Taura (2008)

By the 1950s, Cuba’s educational history had developed along a modern path within the Enlightenment’s secular tradition but checked by significant academic competition provided by the Roman Catholic Church and the increasing number of lay private schools. Where public education was lacking—blatantly so in rural areas and among a few sectors—the failure was deemed to be political by a growing nationalist, predominantly urban and educated population. (Cruz-Taura, 2008, p. 168)

According to Cruz-Taura (2008, p. 168), this period right before the socialist revolution there was a political order, dictatorship between 1952 and 1958, that led the country into an inability to attain the social and economic fulfillment in education. Cruz-Taura asserts that illiteracy was around 23% in the general population. Thus, a reaction to all of those inadequacies culminated into socialist revolution commanded mainly by the brothers Fidel Castro and Raul Castro and the already communist Che Guevara. Hence, more than a moral revolution against corruption, the Cuban revolution had been also motivated by the dynamics of class inequity and reproduction, an unsuited labor force, and a societal alienation. Consequently, all those issues contributed to shape the socialist revolution in Cuba.

The new government was therefore engaged in guaranteeing education for all. Cruz (2015, p. 196) affirms that such an attitude required infrastructure and teachers continuing preparation even in rural areas. By this time, the idea of education as one of the most important human rights was common among Cuban educational specialists. Under this circumstance, the Cuban State took responsibility to foster and implement educational policies with the people and for the people, nevertheless all of that based on what the ‘gallego<sup>4</sup>’ Fidel Castro thought was popular and represented Cuba. José Martí (as cited in Cruz, 2015) claims that “Every person who arrives on the earth has the right to be educated,

---

<sup>4</sup> Someone who is directly descendant or originally from Galicia, an autonomous community of Spain and historic nationality under Spanish law.

and the obligation to educate others” (p. 196). In line with Cruz (2015, p. 196), we infer that soon Cuba created the educational context in which a Marxist-Leninist philosophy started to influence the political ideology during the 1960s. Since the “Year of Education” in 1961, the year when Cuba eradicated illiteracy, educational reforms have been made in order to elaborate new educational approaches to foster a unique schooling in Cuba. Among those reforms, we highlight in this study, the implementation of local knowledges in the local Primary Education.

Indeed, the Marxist-Leninist philosophy had a great impact on the already existing Cuban ideology on education, especially, based on Jose Martí. Then, the Cuban educational authorities appropriated Marxism and Leninism through their articulation with the most radical elements of Martí’s thoughts. Cruz (2015, p. 208) states that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Cuban educational authorities elaborated the argument that Jose Martí established a particular method in the study of countries that he lived and worked, including Spain, Mexico, Guatemala, Venezuela, and the United States. Buenavilla (as cited in Cruz, 2015) claims that the work of José Martí is valued for its

[...] deep observation of the economic, social and political life of these countries, stopping to study their education systems, schools, teachers, syllabuses and programs, and curricula. Similarly, he [Martí] was aware of the most significant educational reforms in Europe, about which he made both positive and negative references to in his articles: ‘The ongoing respect for Popular Education in Sweden’, ‘Popular education just saved France’, ‘Popular education has given contemporary Germany its great power. (Buenavilla, as cited in Cruz, 2015, p. 208)

Furthermore, Nassif (2010, p. 17) asserts that two ideas are central to Martí’s thoughts. The first one is that education is the preparation of man to life without neglecting the spirituality and the conformation of man in his time. From the latter, we can imply that education represents for an individual the conquest of his or her autonomy, naturalness, and spirituality. Such ideas are exposed in the following definitions of education given by Martí as seen in Nassif (2010).

Education [...] empowers men to obtain, with openness and honesty, the indispensable means of life in their time of existence, without disdaining, therefore, the delicate, superior and spiritual aspirations that represent the best part of being human (II, 495). Education has an inescapable duty to man [...] to conform him to his time, without alienating him from the great and final human tendency(II, 497). To educate is to deposit in man all the human work that preceded it; it is to make every man a synthesis of the living world ... to put him at the level of his time ... to prepare him for life (II, 507). To educate is to give man the keys of the world, which are independence and love, and to prepare his forces so that they may turn to them in the joyful step of natural and free men (I, 1965). (Nassif, 2010, p. 16)

Miranda (as cited in Cruz, 2015, p. 196) understands that although the appropriation of Marxist-Leninism seemed to be foreign or alienating for Cubans, it was harmonized with many previous ideas already performed by the pedagogical tradition in the island. Miranda claims that the current epistemological orientation in Cuba has been ideologically planned to fit the social context. As one may know, the Cuban Educational Primary System is very cohesive and centralized. Carnoy et al. (2007, p. 2) affirm that the Cuban State has a strict approach to enforce the implementation of the curriculum and child-centered methods based on Vygotsky. They assert that there is a chain of command that begins with the minister of education and ends with directors and assistant directors of school supervising teachers in their classrooms. As a result, Carnoy et al. state that teachers develop a feeling of being competent and responsible for delivering a well-defined national curriculum.

Nevertheless, it is relevant to explore the role of schooling in the Cuban Primary Educational System. Even though Cuban educational authorities managed to bring local elements to the Primary System, the Cuban schooling still seems to hold the worldwide “Prussian system of schooling<sup>5</sup>” mainly because of its adoption of a Marxist-Leninist philosophy which is also part of the Western epistemology. Furthermore, it is also relevant to explore to what extent the adoption of a European theory such as Marxism-Leninism may actually re-structure the white supremacy power in the island as Moore (2015) strongly argues.

## **2.2 Nationalization of the curriculum**

The nationalization of the curriculum in Cuba has a great relevance for this study, because it indicates the implementation of local knowledges in the primary national curriculum. Hence, this section intends to give an overview of the historical and political events that led Cuba into a profound transformation in its internal and external politics after the revolution of 1959. Likewise, we discuss the Cuban dynamism represented by the Fidel Castro’s strategic identity in cubanizing the most appropriate Western discourses in the name of the Cuban Revolution. Internally and externally, feasible changes took place in politics, economics, and in the society. Under such a circumstance, the socialist regime envisaged education as the main agent for the ongoing revolution. Gasperini (as cited in Carnoy et al.,

---

<sup>5</sup> For Definition of Prussian System of Schooling see the documentary ‘La Educacion Proibida’.



2007) states that, “In a revolutionary society, education is a ‘frontline’ activity and teaching in schools a prestigious occupation” (p. 30). Therefore, in line with Breidlid (2013, p. 146) we understand that this education discourse has been built essentially as anti-imperialist and anti-neocolonialist.

Guevara and Beckford (as cited in Breidlid, 2013, p. 146) viewed the Cuban revolution as a moral one, therefore Guevara wanted to shape the new man of Cuba, based on moral and idealistic rather than on economic principles. It was a very profound revolution that transformed politics, economics, and society. In such a context, according to Breidlid “Education was thought to be the spearhead of the Cuban revolution” (p. 146). The educational main goal was beyond the literacy campaign in 1961, with the “Year of Education”. Indeed, it is evident that the great intent of the revolutionary regime was to use education as an effective and functional weapon against neo-colonialism and imperialism. “The battle to be won against ignorance will give our country more glory than the military battles already fought or to be fought” (Castro as cited in Breidlid, p. 147). Moreover, we argue that the whole process of cubanization of the national curriculum in primary education was an attempt to lessen the alien education discourse before the revolution in 1959 as discussed in the previous section.

Breidlid (2013, p. 153) agrees with Cruz (2015, p. 195) when the scholar asserts that even though the educational discourse in Cuba is based on Cartesian epistemology, the educational discourse is situated in a context of nationalism. We would go a step further and in line with Matthews (1970, p. 337), we affirm that the educational discourse in Cuba is in fact situated in a context of Fidelism and therefore nationalism. Breidlid (p. 153) understands that such an approach was able to prevent an undifferentiated and uncritical import of educational ideas from the West. The scholar also mentions the influence of two heroes and martyrs, Jose Martí and Che Guevara, besides Fidel Castro in the dominant or hegemonic educational discourse in Cuba. First, for Martí (as cited in Breidlid, p. 153), no social equality would be possible without equality in education and culture. Second, Guevara pointed out the importance of creating a new, radical consciousness among the people and the adoption of moral rather than material incentives. Finally, Fidel Castro (as cited in Breidlid) has emphasized the arguments above by affirming that “Building socialism and communism is not just a matter of producing and distributing wealth but is also a matter of education and consciousness” (p. 153).

In line with Matthews (1970, p. 342), we understand that the Cuban Revolution was indeed a Castro's revolution. In the book *Fidel Castro: Uma Biografia Política* translated to English as *Fidel Castro: A Political Biography*, Matthews mentions the dynamism of the Cuban revolution in nationalizing the Western concepts. Matthews states that "Fidel Castro was more than willing to be a Marxist-Leninist and therefore establishing a communist regime, however the revolution had to continuing being his and the communism had also to be his own, personal, special, revolutionary ... and Cuban" (p. 337). Actually, there is nothing in the world similar to the communism in Cuba, if we can really categorize Castro's regime as communism. We rather see it as a sort of socialism due to the presence of a strong and centralized State. Moreover, in line with Hall et al. (1995, p. 597-598), we understand that Fidel's identification with communism has been built up due to the social political and economical context after the revolution.

Hall et al. (1995, p. 597/598) argue for a sociological subject identity that is not formed autonomously and self-sufficiently, but in relation to the society. Such identification was formed as a political strategy against the imperialistic world and for the maintenance of the socialist revolution. Hall et al. can easily explain what Matthews (1970, p. 342) defines as the dynamism of the Cuban Revolution through the person of Fidel by stating that "The subject still has an inner core or essence that is "the real me," but this is formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the cultural worlds "outside" and the identities which they offer" (p. 597). In conclusion, such reasoning implies that Fidel extended his beliefs, moral, and principles to Cuba as whole in order to establish the new national culture.

### **3.0 Theoretical framework**

In this chapter, we shall describe the scope of theories that enabled the investigation about the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System. As one may know, Cuba is known to have been strongly influenced by the Marxist-Leninist philosophy. However, as discussed in the section 2.2, Breidlid (2013, p. 153) states that Cuba has managed to situate the Western epistemology into a cubanized context. Currently, part of the cubanization process can be noticed through the presence of local cultural manifestations, local knowledges, specially, in the Primary Schools.

In this study, we attempt to balance the power relation in knowledge production by bringing the Cuban perspectives on local knowledges to dialogue with the Western ones as a conceptual framework. Hence, firstly it is relevant to explain why we decided to work with the term “local knowledges”, instead of “indigenous knowledges”. Secondly, we explore the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System through the lenses of cultural capital from Bourdieu and Passeron (1990, p. 54). Likewise, we understand that it is also relevant for this study to explore the concepts of social and human capital. Thirdly, we discuss the Cuban hybrid tradition on education and the Cuban educational third space through CHAT theory as found in Engeström (2015) and in the book *Activity Theory in Education* by Dilani and Gedera (2016). Finally, we investigate to what extent Cuba departs from the global architecture of education, GAE, as found in Jones (2007, p. 325).

#### **3.1 Indigenous knowledges or local knowledges?**

In line with Sefa Dei (2002, p. 336) we understand education as the varied options, strategies, and ways through which people come to know themselves as well as the world they act within. However, Sefa Dei asserts that this conceptualization of education draws on the intersection of indigenous knowledges, spirituality, culture, and identity in the learning process. Even though Sefa Dei explores the implementation of local knowledges in the educational system, the scholar considers the terms local knowledges and indigenous knowledges as synonyms. Moreover, he adds the term “traditional knowledges”. Conversely, we argue that in order to have a thick description of the theme investigated, it is necessary to define a concept of local knowledges that would fit properly the Cuban context and the people investigated.

Breidlid (2013, p. 169) asserts that the socio-communist ideology of the Cuban regime is likely to avoid any inclusion of religion or spirituality in their education system. Furthermore, the general definition of local knowledges as a synonym of indigenous knowledges or even traditional knowledges may lead this investigation to an uncertain analysis and conclusion, for such a definition would lead to understand Afro-Cubans as indigenous people from Cuba. Rather, we understand Afro-Cubans as blacks in diaspora, as is discussed later still in this section. Sefa Dei (2002) affirms that “[...] to the skeptic, spirituality has no place in education” (p. 336). Whereas the author states that spirituality is not necessary in association with religion or any specific dogma. Indeed, his view of spirituality is the engagement of students and educators in the pursuit of understanding the self and personhood for a collective schooling. Nevertheless, such a separation is not relevant for this study due to the socio-communist ideology of the Cuban government. Hence, in line with Moore (2015), we explore in the analysis chapter why the Afro-Indigenous knowledges related to spirituality or religion have not been implemented in Cuban Primary Educational System.

Moodie (as cited in Breidlid, 2013, p. 31) states that often “indigenous knowledges” are called “local knowledges”. The scholar goes further stating that the term “local” can only be understood in relation to “universal”, and thus the term indigenous knowledge incurs a string of negative judgments. Moodie affirms that “universal” is identified with mainstream, and hence with progress. And so “local” comes to be understood as referring to an intellectual backwater, and whatever is indigenous is therefore considered as primitive or ethnic. Similarly, Moodie agrees with Sefa Dei (2002, p. 336) when the scholars simplify the terms “local knowledges” and “indigenous knowledges” into synonyms. Particularly, we understand that this interpretation may lead to the idea that the terms “local” and “indigenous” are just the same. Indeed, they might be close once they are related to universal, however for this study, we argue that there is a significant distinction between the terms.

Arguably, this study regards the term “local” as a broader category than “indigenous” according to the Cuban context and the people investigated. The term “Local knowledges” is defined in this study as all knowledges produced by all individuals through all socio-cultural manifestations of a certain community, society, region or country. Whilst “indigenous knowledges”, according to conventional definitions such as in the Special Rapporteur of the UN Economic and Social Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, leads to understand that “indigenous knowledges” can be only produced by minorities of groups, mainly, aborigines or “[...] those who by a variety of historical or

environmental circumstances have been placed outside of the dominant systems” (Intercontinentalry as cited in Breidlid, 2013, p. 30).

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that have developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems. (United Nations, 2004, p. 2)

Despite the definitions above about who are indigenous, and therefore what indigenous knowledges are, some scholars such as Breidlid (2013, p. 30) and Semali and Kincheloe (as cited in Breidlid, 2013, p. 30) attempt to problematize the issue by extending the definition of indigenous peoples in terms of those individuals who have a shared experience of domination. Breidlid, for instance, states that “[...] this domination originates with, and it is perpetuated by, their contact with the Western hegemonic epistemology” (p. 30). Nevertheless, we wonder if such a definition would also serve to identify those individuals who have gone through the process of black diaspora, slavery, and therefore colonial domination in a new land, specially, in the Americas.

Hence, we may ask the question; could the Afro-Cubans be considered as indigenous people from Cuba? According to the intellectual construction of Breidlid (2013, p. 30) we would say, yes. However, according to the UN and conventional definitions the *Tainos* are the indigenous people in Cuba. Thus, in order to avoid possible misunderstanding with those definitions, we work with the collocation “local knowledges”, instead of “indigenous knowledges”. Firstly, the term “local knowledges” can encompass all knowledges produced through all socio-cultural manifestations within a determined social space, Cuba. Second, the term is much more flexible regarding the possible absence of indigenous knowledges, as the term is carried by conventional definitions, in the educational system due to the genocide of the *Taino* people throughout the Cuban Island by the time of Spanish invasion.

There are also other reasons why we have decided to work with the implementation of local knowledges, instead of indigenous knowledges. Breidlid (2013, p. 168/169) points out some motives which may justify the weak influence of indigenous knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System. Initially the author states that even though Cuba makes use of indigenous plants from the *Taino*, they are a tiny minority whose epistemological visibility is

weak. As mentioned previously, the author asserts that the socialist regime is skeptical of everything that is related to spirituality. Breidlid adds that

[...] since the very ideological basis of the Cuban state is ratio-dogmatic and non-spiritual in nature, there is a sense that the strong streak of dogmatic Marxism mixed with a nationalistic Martian philosophy provides little space for so-called non-scientific belief systems. (Breidlid, 2013, p. 169)

So far, we have discussed the definitions of local knowledges and indigenous knowledges through the lenses of the Western tradition. However, it is relevant for this case study to contrast the Western views of local knowledges to the Cuban perspective of local knowledges so that we can try to balance the power relation in the knowledge production with a local view.

### **3.2 The forms of capital and the social context in Cuba**

Given the focus of this case study, the implementation of local knowledges in the primary educational system in Cuba, the relationship between the different aspects of capital is particularly important for this discussion. Thus, we explore two forms of capital, first cultural capital and social capital, finally we discuss the model presented by Carnoy et al. (2007, 16) named as state-generated social capital.

Bourdieu (1997) views capital as “[...] accumulated labor in its materialized form or in embodied form which when appropriated on a private, exclusive, basis of agents or group of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form or reified or living labor” (p. 46). In contrast to Marx’s idea of capital in his work *Capital* (1887), Bourdieu defines capital as a force inscribed in objective or subjective structures which is a principle that causes the immanent regularities of the social world. In other words, the French thinker argues that capital should not be solely recognized by the form expressed in economic theory.

#### **3.2a Cultural capital**

We understand the term cultural capital as it refers to the assets of a person that may promote social mobility within a society. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990, p. 7) define cultural capital as the knowledge and cultural background owned by the parents and family. Indeed,

cultural capital functions as a social relation within a system of exchanges and it consists on the totality of material and symbolic goods that a society may consider valuable. Thus, cultural capital includes the accumulated cultural knowledge that may promote social status and power. Bourdieu (1997) affirms that cultural capital can exist in three forms:

[...] in the *embodied state*, i.e. in the form of long-lasting disposition of the body and mind; in the *objectified state*, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.) which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the *institutionalized state*, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which is presumed to guarantee. (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 47)

Among the forms of cultural capital that Bourdieu (1997, p. 47) presents, we highlight the embodied state of cultural capital, because it comprises the knowledge that is consciously acquired and passively inherited through socialization to culture and tradition. Indeed, the embodied cultural capital is not transmissible, rather it is acquired over time. It is based on the person's habitus and culture. From this perspective, we understand that local knowledges as the term has been explored in the section 3.1 is also part of what Bourdieu defines as embodied state cultural capital, since it encompasses all the knowledges culturally produced in the Cuban social space.

In contrast to Carnoy et al. (2007, p. 12) who discarded Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990, p. 54) theoretical hypothesis of cultural capital to describe the Cuban social context, we bring Bourdieu and Passeron back to the educational arena of discussion. Nevertheless, we pay special attention to the embodied state of cultural capital understood by Carnoy et al. (2007) as "[...] the knowledge, behavior, and tastes that the families brought to the educational table" (p. 7). Under this circumstance, it is relevant to comprehend how the theoretical hypothesis of cultural capital also understood as cultural and social reproduction by Bourdieu and Passeron can explain students' failure and alienation in school systems throughout the global South, but not necessarily in Cuba.

Thus, for Bourdieu (1997, p. 47), the notion of cultural capital presented itself to him as a theoretical hypothesis which it made possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from different social classes. This was a break in the common sense view and assumptions that view academic success or failure as an effect of natural aptitudes.

Every institutionalized educational system (ES) owes the specific characteristics of its structure and functioning to the fact that, by the means proper to the institution, it has to produce and reproduce the institutional conditions whose existence and persistence (self-reproduction of the system) are necessary both to the exercise of its essential function of inculcation and to the fulfilment of its function of reproducing a cultural arbitrary which it does not produce (cultural reproduction), the reproduction of which contributes to the reproduction of the relations between the groups or classes (social reproduction). (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 54)

### **3.2b Social capital**

Bourdieu (1997) understands social capital as

[...] the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network or more or less institutionalized relationships or mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its member with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a credential which entitles them to credit, in the various sense of the world. These relationships may exist only in a practical state, in material and / or symbolic exchanges which help to maintain them [...]. (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 51)

Bourdieu and Passeron (1990, p. 11) discuss the pedagogic actions reproduced in schools and therefore they argue that those pedagogical actions correspond to the material and symbolic interests of groups or classes differently situated within the power relations. As a result, Bourdieu and Passeron assert that the pedagogical actions “[...] always tend to reproduce the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among these groups or classes [...]” (p. 11). This is a sort of cycle that contributes systematically to reproduce the social structure.

Unlike other kinds of capital, which is tangible and benefits primarily its owner, social capital is embedded in relationships among individuals or among institutions and benefits all individuals or institutions involved in those relationships by making their work more productive. For example, if a family is particularly cohesive and supportive, and has high expectations for each of its member, that type of family structure can be defined as social capital. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 11)

### **3.2c State-generated social capital vs State-generated Cultural Capital**

Carnoy et al. (2007, p. 14) describe the social network among school, State, and family as the answer to explain the Cuban academic advantage. Carnoy et al. named the extension of social capital from the family to the Cuban State as state-generated social capital.



Carnoy et al. (2007) state that

We extend the notion of social capital to national government policies affecting children's broader social environment – what we call state-generated social capital. Thus, there are national social or “neighborhood” effects that include state interventions in children's welfare and national focus on education that can raise educational expectations for all children, particularly the educationally disadvantaged. Government can therefore generate a cohesive and supportive educational environment on a regional or national scale that creates learning benefits for all students. (Carnoy et al., 2007, p. 14)

The figure 1 below describes what Carnoy et al. (2007, p. 16) understand as state-generated social capital. Conversely, we understand that the schema to represent Cuba's academic advantage is not satisfying, since it lacks the representation of the influence the different forms of knowledges (embodied state cultural capital) provided by local institutions, i.e. State, community, family, and school.

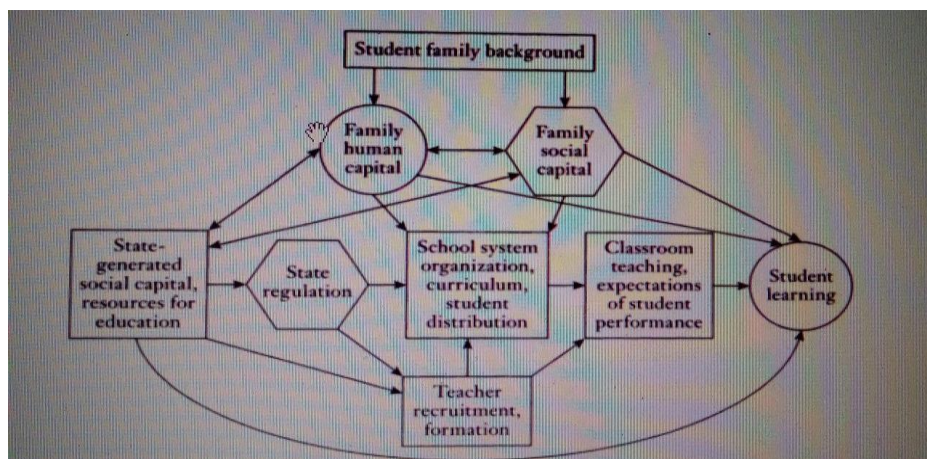


Fig. 1 State-generated social capital adapted from Carnoy et al. (2007, p. 16)

Even though we agree with Carnoy et al. (2007, p. 14), when they state that social and political institutions are great shapers of individual behaviors, we do not agree that only the amount of effort or attitudes that the parents and a State put into the children's schooling is enough to explain the Cuban academic advantage. Instead, we understand that social capital should be aligned with cultural capital (all the knowledges produced in a social space) in order to provide a meaningful schooling system. Thus, we understand that there is an interdependence of the forms of capital.

Nevertheless, we regard the promotion of cultural capital by the Cuban government as the main reason for their achievements in education. Then, such a promotion of cultural

capital has been possible due to the amount of efforts and attitudes (social capital) from the local institutions, i.e. family, community, and State what Carnoy et al. (2007, p. 16) have called state-generated social capital. Indeed, we understand that the reason for the Cuban academic advantage is a set of correlational forms of capital that enable the Cuban pupils' to achieve high grades in international tests carried by UNESCO and at the same time lessen the contradiction between school and home culture.

Given the focus of this research, the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System, we highlight the role of cultural capital as the main agent of preventing the alienation process among the Cuban pupils. For it represents the knowledges (Western knowledge and local knowledges) of the institutions (State, community, family, and school) involved in the social context. From this perspective and in line with Carnoy et al. (2007, p. 16) we extend the term cultural capital to State-generated cultural capital. However, we assume that such a promotion of cultural capital was only possible due to the amount of efforts and attitude (social capital) of the same local institutions, i.e State, community, family, and school.

In the figure 2 below, we attempt to create a schema that represents our model of state-generated cultural capital. However, we must keep in mind that this schema is only possible with the amount of efforts and attitudes (social capital) from the local institutions such as State, community, family, and school. For us, it is impossible to promote cultural capital without social capital.

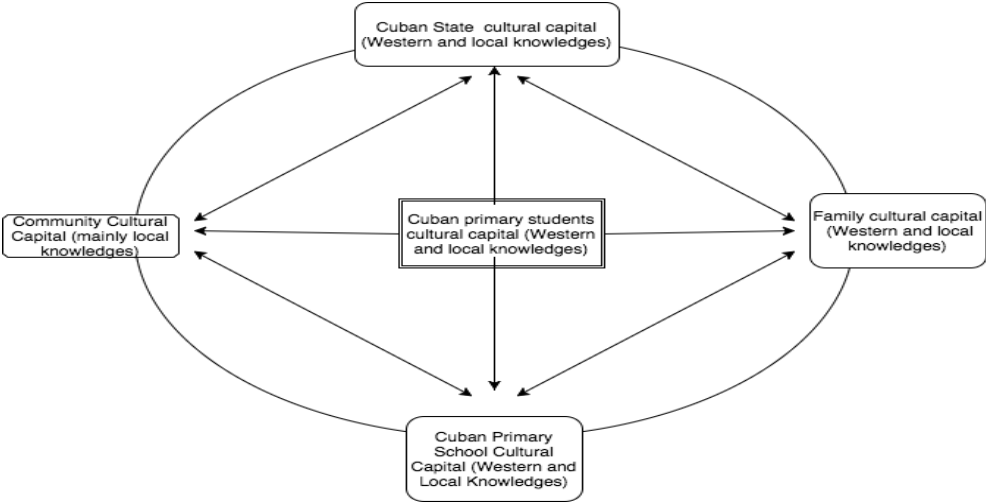


Fig. 2 Proposed schema for State-generated cultural capital (Thiago Nascimento)

In the figure 2, we can see that the promotion of cultural capital in Cuba is actually a

State policy toward the primary pupils. Therefore, it involves all the local institutions. Firstly, in a direct connection with the Cuban State we have the Primary Schools. Indeed, we understand that the Cuban Primary Schools represent the local State and vice-versa. The families are responsible for the exposure students related to cultural capital (Western and local knowledges), but they are already influenced by the State with the creation of the new Cuban national culture with the socialist revolution. Finally, we see the communities as social spaces where the children are mainly exposed to the local culture manifestations, local knowledges. However, such local knowledges have also been influenced by the Cuban State due to the creation of new Cuban culture with the socialist revolution.

Overall, it is evident that the Cuban State has a main role in providing cultural capital (Western and local knowledges) that would support the socialist revolution and at the same time as Carnoy et al. (2007, p. 14) states, they are able to shape individual behaviors with the creation of a new national culture.

### **3.3 CHAT theory and the third space in CPES**

In this section, we present CHAT theory in order to investigate the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System. Thus, in line with Miranda (as cited in Cruz, 2015, p. 196), we understand that the Cuban hybrid tradition<sup>6</sup> on education has been able to generate a third space, since the Cuban educational authorities managed to harmonize the Marxist-Leninist theory with the most local elements of the Cuban tradition on education. Hence, in line with Bhabha (1994, p. 269) we understand that such a space is likely to prevent the alienation process Cuban primary pupils might have due to the exposure of Western knowledges. Moreover, Breidlid (2013, p. 48) suggests the use of CHAT as a way to operationalize and comprehend the third space.

Also known as Activity Theory or the third generation cultural-historical activity theory, the term CHAT was first used by Michael Cole and soon popularized by Yrjö Engeström during the 1990s relating to Vygotsky's work. As one may know, CHAT is commonly used in educational researches as a conceptual lens through which data are interpreted. According to

---

<sup>6</sup> For Definition of Hybrid Tradition on Cuban Education See Miranda (2005 in Massón Cruz, 2015, p. 196).

Engeström (2015, p. 63), it is a sort of triangular model of an activity system that is generally applied as a graphic model and lens for interpretive data analyses. In those analyses, the model of an activity system makes visible the context of the educational processes under investigation. Thus, the context is represented as a systemic formation where specific components and their relations can be identified and examined in detail.

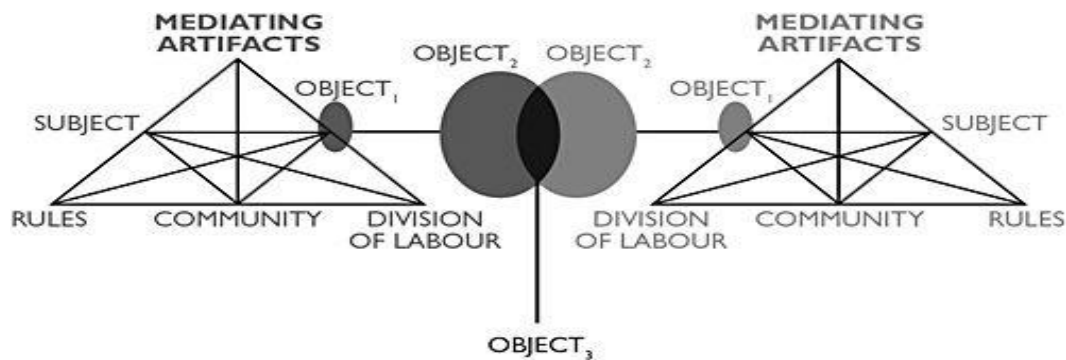


Fig. 3 Two interacting traditions on education generating a third space. (Breidlid, 2013, p. 48)

The figure 3 describes the new space generated by the Cuban hybrid tradition on education. On one side as object one, we have the Marxist-Leninist philosophy and on the other side as object two the Cuban Ideology on education and finally the object three is the third space generated, a space where the alien education seems to be lessened continuously. Among the local elements, we pay a special attention to the implementation of local knowledges that will be explored in the analysis chapter.

Breidlid (2013) states that “CHAT is used as framework for decolonizing knowledge-making by challenging some of the dominant knowledge traditions that hegemonize Western epistemology by claiming universality” (p. 49). About the use of CHAT, Breidlid adds that

On a micro level it implies creating dialogues across traditional barriers and knowledge systems by breaking down the skewed power relationships and redistributing power. Moreover, such dialogues imply participation (within the redistributive power framework) and open up spaces for sustainable change. (Breidlid, 2013) p. 49)

In addition to that, in Engeström’s work *Innovative learning in work teams: analysing cycles of knowledge creation in practice* (1999), the scholar is interested in the process of social transformation that includes the structure of the social world in analysis, taking into

account the conflictual nature of social practice. Thus, Engeström argues for joint activity as the unit of analysis for activity theory, and not an individual activity. Engeström sees instability and contradiction as the “[...] motive force of change and development” (p. 9). Likewise, he understands the transitions and reorganizations within and between activity systems as part of evolution.

From this point of view, the scholar defends that both subject and environment are modified through mediated activity. For this reason, we make use of CHAT theory in order to comprehend the contradictions found in the current Cuban Primary Educational System. Thus, we see the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban primary curriculum as the result of historical educational reforms that took place after the Cuban Revolution.

Engeström (1999) has established the actions in which CHAT can foster expansive learning as it follows:

- The first action is that is that of questioning, criticizing or rejecting some aspects of the accepted practice or existing wisdom.
- The second action is that of analyzing the situation. Analysis involves mental, discursive or practical transformation of the situation in order to find out causes and or explanatory mechanism.
- The third action is that of modeling the newly found explanatory relationship in some publicly observable and transmittable medium.
- The forth action is that of examining the model, running, operating and experimenting on it in order to fully grasp its dynamics, potentials and limitations.
- The fifth action is that o implementing by means of practical applications, enrichments, and conceptual extensions.
- The sixth and seventh actions are those of reflecting and evaluating the process and consolidating its outcomes into a new stable form of practice.

(Engeström , 1999, p. 383/384)

In line with Breidlid (2013, p. 49), Bhabha (1994, p. 66) argues for a re-signification of power relations in the knowledge production. Bhabha understands that if we can re-signify or signify differently the power relation in the knowledge production, we can be able to subvert or transform the oppressive patterns of the hegemonic knowledge. According to Bhabha (1994, p. 66), we are still living the consequences of colonialism and its effects can be felt in

and recreated in different manners. In line with Bhabha (p. 66) we understand that all around us is the colonial discourse, particularly, the hegemonic knowledge.

Moreover, Bhabha (1994, p. 269) understands hybridity as the area or space where changes are likely to take place. For Bhabha, the hybrid offers insight into what is actually possible. Bhabha argues that

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the necessity of thinking beyond initial categories and initiatory subjects and focusing on those interstitial moments or process that are produced in the articulations of “differences”. These spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of self-hood and communal representations that generate new signs of cultural difference and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation. It is at the level of interstices that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 269)

Bhabha (1994, p. 269) understands that all societies are hybrid and therefore different cultures and knowledges systems may operate in the same space. Thus, Breidlid (2013) states that there is a sort of dialectic between knowledges systems where one fills the gap of the other, nevertheless “[...] there is a tension and an asymmetry that needs to be addressed”(p. 47). Breidlid adds that third space is sort of “[...] space that generates new possibilities by questioning entrenched categorizations of knowledge systems and cultures and opens up new avenues with, and it is important to underline, a counter-hegemonic strategy.” (p. 47).

Soja (1996) states in a broad sense that “Thirdspace is a purposefully and flexible term to attempt to capture what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings” (p. 2). From this broad definition, we can infer that the third space concept is indeed a gap between the first and the second space which can collaborate to create the third space. Thus, the first and the second space are different and therefore they ought to be conflicted with each other so that a third space is generated. Furthermore, Breidlid (2013) asserts that

[...] the third space is indeed a reminiscent of Freire’s (1970) concept of dialogue where conscientization is the ultimate goal. Freire’s concept of dialogue potentially provides the foundation for a re-imagining of the teacher-student relationship in this new space. A third space that transcends the teacher-student relationship onto a more trans-personal level indicates some sort of undogmatic, non-entrenched space where both potential nostalgic claims of indigenous authenticity, Western pretensions of superiority, and inherent contradictions in both knowledge systems can be interrogated for new negotiations. (Breidlid, 2013, p. 48)

In line with Marx (1987, p. 122), we understand the Cuban Primary Educational System

as a synthesis of social actions and historical processes that resulted in a hybrid schooling system with localized subjects and with the implementation of local knowledges. Therefore, it indicates a third space. Nevertheless, we wonder whether the local elements, local knowledges, implemented in the Cuban Primary Educational System are regarded as valuable at the same level as the Marxist-Leninist philosophy or simply subjugated knowledges.

In relation to the latter, we agree with Bhabha (1994, p. 66) when the scholar denounces the colonial discourse on the construction of otherness. Therefore, we understand that the subjugation of local knowledges represents the epistemological dimension of colonialism. Breidlid (2013) states that “The inherent danger of such a space is the perpetuation of imbalance and asymmetry between the knowledge systems – between the dichotomized space of Self and Other within the third space” (p. 47). Breidlid adds that all the issue of power is central in exploring the third space and that local knowledges are likely to be subjugated.

About the colonial discourse of the construction of otherness, Bhabha states that “Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy, and demonic repetition” (p. 66). From this perspective, it is relevant to observe to what extent is the presence of Afro-indigenous cultural manifestations in the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System. Likewise, we wonder if the implementation of local knowledges could actually prevent the alienation process among Cuban primary pupils. Hence, in line with Breidlid (2013, p. 141) we highlight the necessity of researching the epistemological basis of the Cuban Primary Educational System.

### **3.4 The global architecture of education**

Burbules and Torres (2000) argue that “The pattern of global economic restructuring, which emerged in late seventies, went hand and hand with the implementation of neoliberal policies in many nations” (p. 4 /5). As a result, they affirm that globalization became an ideological discourse driving change around the world because of a necessity to respond to a new world order. Burbules and Torres’ argument is in line with Jones (2007, p. 325) who states that education as a construction of world order has been the focus of mainstream international relations since the Second World War. As a result, the process of globalization

in educational systems around the world seems to follow a trend of universalization imposed by international agents, in many cases, leading to violations of national sovereignties as well as of human rights in the global South.

Jones (2007, p. 325) argues that each State is entitled to recognition and respect of its sovereignty and right to self-determination, and this includes its arrangements for educational provision. Nevertheless, Jones affirms that the world of international relationships is marked by decisive inequalities in global power relations. Therefore central capitalistic states struggle for their advantages in systematic ways whereby they exercise their influence and control over the others. Jones extends the concept of globalization in education to what is known as global architecture of education, GAE.

Thus, Jones defines the global architecture of education as “A complex web of ideas, network of influence, policy frameworks and practices, financial arrangements and organizational structures” (p. 325). In addition, Jones states that “[...] it is a system of global power relations that exert a heavy, even determining, influence on how education is constructed around the world” (p. 325). However, Cuba seems partially to fall out of such a structural influence due to its anti-imperialistic approach which led to the creation of their own ideology on education. For this reason, it is relevant for this study to explore the tension between the global architecture of education and the Cuban ideology on education.

According to Varghese and Buchert (2011), “The current level of educational development in any country is the result of educational planning made in the past” (p. 49). This means that those modern States that have invested larger amounts of their national income in the educational systems are able to experience rapid progress in education than those that have invested less. However, the argument that national governments need development partners to help them to increase availability and accelerate progress towards achieving the EFA goals does not seem to be true when analyzing the Cuban case. Likewise, the argument that enrolment in primary education is expanding rapidly towards being universal in least developed countries due to national efforts and primarily to international support is seen in this study as a fallacy or in a more moderate way a misconception. Moreover, we defend that such a discourse has not been designed to promote changes, rather to maintain the status quo established in the poor countries of the world.

According to Breidlid (2013, p. 163) Cuba has resisted the globalized drive for privatization, and its merits have been accomplished with no assistance from the World Bank



or the IMF. Breidlid adds by stating that such accomplishment could only be possible due to the regime's commitment to education for all, keeping the education budget at high level despite the critical situation of the State economy. In 2001, James Wolfensohn, the former president of the World Bank announced that Cuba has been doing a great job in the field of education and health. He asserted that the World Bank has nothing to do with the Cuban success and that they, the Cubans, should be congratulated on what they have reached so far (Red Feather Institute as cited in Breidlid, 2013). Nevertheless, it is also relevant for this study to explore the role of UNESCO in Cuba, since it is the only international agent in the Caribbean Island.

In line with Jones (2007, p. 325), Breidlid (2013, p. 2) argues that the hegemonic Western epistemology is the main element of the global architecture of education. The scholar asserts that the Western epistemology has a considerable influence on the educational system around the world, specially, in the global South. Moreover, Breidlid (p. 55) argues that the imposition of Western Knowledge and the lack of recognition of non-Western epistemologies can create alienation, especially, when students' knowledges from home or their community are not valued in the school. The Norwegian scholar calls attention to the language of instruction in schools and the local culture representation in the didactic materials.

According to Hurlich (1998, p. 1) Creole language is the second language spoken in Cuba after Spanish. Creole is the first and second language of the Haitian Creole community and their descendants who had migrated to Cuba during the Haitian Revolution. Hurlich adds that "Over 400,000 Cubans either speak it fluently, understand it but speak with difficulty, or have at least some familiarity with the language" (p. 1). Miller (2011) states that "Spanish is the principal and official language of the island, but that does not mean that it was the only language spoken" (p. 535). That means that besides Spanish, there are other languages that can be spoken in Cuba, nevertheless they are not regarded as vernacular. Lucumi and Abakuá, for instance, are understood by Miller as languages used exclusively for ceremonial purposes as in Santería<sup>7</sup>. Finally, we recognize the existence of two similar languages in Cuba that are often misunderstood; the vernacular and cubanized language known as 'Cuban Spanish' and the official language 'Spanish'.

Notably, the Cuban socialist government is able to offer classes in those languages where there is a great concentration of speakers. Hurlich (1998, p. 1) reports that Creole classes are

---

<sup>7</sup> Santería is a Yoruba religious manifestation very popular among Afro-Cubans. According to Travel Cuba (2006), Santería is religious practice, values, beliefs, and traditions of Yoruba descent mixed with Catholicism.

conducted in the provinces of Guatanamo, Matanzas, and in the city of Havana where there is a considerable number of Haitian inhabitants or descendants. Ngugi (1986) states that “The physical violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom” (p. 9). The Kenyan scholar denounces the cultural violence imposed by the colonizing power in establishing a colonial language in the school systems of the colonies throughout the African continent.

However, we understand that the situation of blacks in diaspora is quite different from our brothers and sisters in our motherland, Africa. First, it is relevant to state that our ancestors have been enslaved and brought to Americas more than four hundred years ago. Second, even though the majority of Afro-Cubans belong to the Yoruba ethnicity, there were also other enslaved blacks from different parts of the African continent. Thus, both facts hindered the maintenance of our mother languages. Therefore, our ancestors had to appropriate the language imposed by the colonizing powers. As we have the Cuban Spanish in Cuba, we also have Brazilian Portuguese in Brazil. The language is ours now. Hence, we shall use it the way we want. Nevertheless, in Brazil, for instance, we still struggle to recognize our language as simply Brazilian, as a way to get rid of any refraction of the colonizing power.

Brock-Utne (2014) states that “The best way to improve the learning outcomes of poor performers school would be to have them learn in the language they know best and normally speak”(p. 8). From this perspective, and in accordance to the situation of blacks in diaspora throughout the American continent, there is no doubt that the appropriated Cuban Spanish language is the language that the majority of Afro-Cubans know best nowadays. However, we have to bear in mind that the official language in Cuba is actually Spanish, a Western European language. Thus, we can infer that the Spanish language may be an alien form for Afro-Indigenous Cubans in general. Notwithstanding, Cuban Spanish and Spanish language are very similar versions that most discrepancies lie on the lexicon. Besides, the spoken language used by the teachers in class is a mix Cuban Spanish and Spanish. The alienation caused by the language of instruction is actually very low.

In relation to the Lucumi language, we consider it as ‘special language’<sup>8</sup>, since it has lost

---

<sup>8</sup> According to Van Gennep (1908) and Petter, M.M.T.(1998), ‘special languages’ are languages that are no longer pidgin neither creole. Furthermore, they have lost their functions throughout the time and currently serving as secret languages to avoid the understanding of outsiders. Likewise those languages are generally used in Afro-religious rituals in Brazil such as Candomblé. Contrasting the situation of a language called “cupópia” in Brazil and “Lucumi”, spoken in Santería ceremonies in Cuba, we assume that they belong to same category.

its functions throughout the time and today it serves just as secret language during Santería ceremonies. It is relevant to state that Santería ceremonies are mainly carried by Youruba descendants. Thus, we understand that there is no need to offer classes in that language since the number of speakers is reduced and the great majority of the Afro-Cubans speakers has already appropriated the Cuban Spanish language as their mother language. Under this circumstance, we understand that the language of instruction in Cuba is not an issue that could hinder the teaching and learning process. Nevertheless, it is relevant for this study to explore the content of knowledge 'transmitted' in the Cuban schooling system.

Conversely, in line with Freire (1970, p. 64), we do not understand the language of instruction as the vehicle through which knowledge is 'transmitted' as in the banking model of education, rather we understand the language of instruction as a vehicle through which knowledges can be produced through dialogues. Freire explains the banking model of education by saying that students are treated as empty vessel to be filled with knowledge. For Freire, the use of dialogues between facilitators and students is meant to have conscientization as the main goal. Hence, it is relevant for this study to investigate to what extent the Cuban Primary Education System is able to promote conscientization among their primary pupils.

## 4.0 Methodology

In this chapter, we present the methodological approach of this study. It includes a presentation and discussion of methods we have used for data collection, i.e. sampling of informants, video observations, photographs, notes about field relations, and all the challenges during the fieldwork. This study agrees with Bryman (2004, p. 266) when the scholar understands a qualitative research approach as inductive in the sense that theory is generated from research. Thus, rather than generate new theory, this study contributes to the already existing scope of knowledge in the field of local knowledges. Nevertheless, in line with Smith (1999, p. 69), we understand that local and indigenous scholars who have been assimilated by the hegemonic knowledge production should remember who they are, and therefore foster their own methods and approaches of local and indigenous researches.

Firstly, this study was designed to be anti-positivist. Hence, we decided to work under a qualitative paradigm of research, i.e. constructionist approach. For Bryman (2004, p. 266), qualitative research is described as constructionist, thereafter he states that this sort of research suggests that social properties are results of the interactions between the individuals, instead of phenomena “out there” and not affected by those involved in its construction. According to Hall (as cited in Cohen et al. 2011) “Research should be viewed as a dialectic process, a dialogue over time, and not a static picture of reality at one point in time” (p. 39). It means that instead of researching for a universal truth, we would rather go for a moment of reality of the research. Furthermore, we also agree with Brock-Utne (1996) when the scholar addresses a qualitative research as a holistic one in the sense that “[...] it attempts to provide a contextual understanding of the complex interrelationships of causes and consequences that affect the human behavior [...]” (p. 609).

Hence, we have decided to follow the paradigm of a participatory research as an instance of critical theory, because it breaks with conventional ways of constructing research and therefore it is also a way to attempt to decolonize the research. As Cohen et al. (2011) state “[...] it concerns to doing research *with* people and communities rather than doing research *to* or *for* people and communities.” (p. 37). Bryman argues that “[...] the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants” (p. 266). Hence, the interpretation of local knowledges by Cuban educators is viewed in this study as an attempt to balance the power relations in the production of “knowledges”. In line with Campbell (as cited in Cohen et al. 2011, p. 37), we understand participatory research as a

reaction to those western researchers who have adopted a top-down approach in order to work with local communities, thus neglecting their local knowledges.

Secondly, this study is fundamentally inductive, because all the theories used generated from the data collected during the fieldwork. Geertz (1973) states that,

[...] to practice ethnography is to establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keep a diary, and so on. But it is not these things, techniques and received procedures that define the enterprise. What defines it is the kind of intellectual effort it is: an elaborate venture in, to borrow a notion from Gilbert Ryle. (Geertz, 1973, p. 311/312)

Using the inductive approach enabled us to analyze and collect data simultaneously. Likewise, as in the citation above, Geertz (p. 312) uses an inductive way of making research which opens up for generating thick descriptions. A similar idea is found in Marx (1859/1904, p. 122) where the method chosen to perform this research is based on a historical progression of ideas also resulting in thick descriptions. In Marx's first publication of *Zur Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie*, translated to English as *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, the German thinker argues that “[...] the concrete is concrete because it is a synthesis of many determinations, in other words, it is a unity of the diverse” (p. 122).

Marx (1859/1904, p. 122) states that the concrete comes through the thoughts of humans as a process of synthesis of determinations (social actions, and historical processes.) It thrives in its own contradictions, which is Western vs. non-Western, deriving a new synthesis as seen in the Cuban Primary Educational System resulting in hybrid schooling with localized subjects and with the implementation of local knowledges. Indeed, it becomes thick and descriptive. The “unity of diversity” is in that case a cultural and human reality, which is constructed and processed in relation to contradicting social processes, the local epistemology, and its contradicting realities.

#### **4.1 Decolonizing Research**

This section discusses the attempt to decolonize social research. Hence, Smith (1999, p. 69) argues that much of the discussion about native scholars in social and cultural life as well as their participation in anti-colonial fights have been influenced by Marxist revolutionary thought. Nevertheless, we understand that Marxism is also a European theory and therefore alien to us, Afro-Indigenous. In line with Smith, Fanon (1963, p. 158/159) recognizes that

intellectuals were trained and encultured in the West.

Thus, Fanon (1963, p. 158/159) identifies three stages through which indigenous or local scholars ought to progress in their intellectual journeys “back over the line”, to decolonize their researches. The first stage, scholars should be aware that they have been assimilated into the culture of the hegemonic power. In the second stage, there is the period of disturbance when the native scholars are likely to remember who they really are. In the third stage, Fanon understands that the native intellectuals should seek to awaken their people. There is now the necessity to realign themselves with the people and produce a revolutionary and national literature.

We acknowledge that to try to decolonize research can be potentially very complex depending on the social context in which the research is performed. First of all, because according to Fanon (1963, p.156), the native intellectual has thrown himself or herself greedily upon the Western culture and therefore it is a big challenge to break their ties with it. Second, still in line with Fanon (p. 160), we understand that at the moment when the native intellectual attempts to create a cultural work he or she fails to realize they are actually using techniques and language borrowed from a colonizing power.

Conscious of that, we ask whether it would be possible to write this thesis in Afro or Indigenous language such as “Lucumi” or “Creole”, or “Taino”, or even in any “Bantu” languages or “Tupi-Guarani”, since this research is mainly conducted by an Afro-Indigenous Brazilian. Likewise, we would ask about the format of this thesis, would it be acceptable to deliver it as in non-Western format such as a narrative or story-telling or even just an oral discourse? Indeed, we are aware that the format of this study is already a bit unusual for the Western academic culture.

That might sound a bit radical, but for us decolonizing research should be at least in line with Smith (1999, p. 125) when the scholar defends ‘Kaupapa Maori’ in New Zealand as an indigenous approach toward culturally appropriate research protocols and methodologies. For Smith, her book *Decolonizing Methodology: Research and Indigenous Peoples* was designed primarily to develop indigenous peoples as researchers. Such an approach attempts to bring to the center and privilege indigenous values, attitudes, practices and above all knowledges rather than disguising them within Westernized labels such as collaborative research. Smith emphasizes the necessity of indigenous approaches by defending that

Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behaviors as an integral part of methodology. They are 'factors' to be built in to research explicitly, to be thought about reflexively, to be declared openly as part of the research design, to be discussed as part of the final results of a study and to be disseminated back to the people in culturally appropriate ways and in a language that can be understood. (Smith, 1999, p. 15)

Our thesis is in line with Smith's book, for the reader can be exposed to many ways of decolonizing the research, whereas we shall focus on the existing difficulties we had during the fieldwork in Cuba. I.e. the little access to the educational authorities and experts made it difficult to fully achieve our goal of decolonizing the research. For instance, the attempt to invite the former sub- director of the primary school in Havana, Perondo Domingo, to be a co-supervisor was accepted by my supervisor, Anders Breidlid, nevertheless the little time in the fieldwork and the difficulty to maintain contact hindered the negotiation. Indeed, it was an attempt to decolonize the research in its very fundamental basis by having a European and a Cuban supervisor. Then, after not being successful in the first attempt, we tried to negotiate with Cuban educational specialists the understanding of what local knowledges meant to them. Strategically, it was from this point that we came up with the idea of working with an approach that could sort of localize the methodology used for this study.

Under such a circumstance, we decided to work with "Etnopesquisa Aplicada", ethno-research developed by Roberto Macedo (2012) along with a Marxist and Geertzian approach. Hence, we understand the approach used by the Brazilian thinker as the attitude the researcher should have in the fieldwork, the involvement, in other words, the act of taking part in the research as a collaborator, rather than as an observer. Thus, we tried to harmonize the Marxist and Geertzian methods described previously to the involved ethno-research approach by Macedo in order to balance the power relation of knowledge production at the level of methodology.

According to Macedo (2012, p. 51) when putting the approach into action, the collaborators need to work together to define objectives, research questions, new abilities, the plan of action etc. Macedo's approach is in line with participatory research, since according to Giroux (as cited in Cohen et al. 2011) "It is profoundly democratic, with all participants as equals; it strives for a participatory rather than a representative democracy" (p. 37). Besides that, Cohen et al. (2011) state that "Participatory research respects the indigenous, popular knowledge that resides in members of communities, rather than the relatively antiseptic world and knowledge of the expert researcher" (p. 37). Cohen et al. add that "Local people can

transform their lives through knowledge and their use of that knowledge; knowledge is power, with local members of the community collectively being active and in control” (p.37). Cohen et al. state that such an approach is very similar to Freire’s work, because it is itself educative.

According to Macedo (2012, p. 51), ethno-research approach argues that researchers should always negotiate meaning with the locals, because informants are actually experts. During the fieldwork, we had to discuss the meaning of the term local knowledges. Thus, we had a meeting in which we had to explain why we were using the term local knowledges instead of indigenous knowledges. Likewise, we also discussed the difference between local knowledges and local history. At first, the Cuban educational specialists did not seem familiar with the term local knowledges. But then, they understood our definition in relation to the Cuban context. Furthermore, we also noticed that the Cuban regime is very skeptical of foreign researchers, because they take their revolutionary educational system seriously and any attempt to hinder the educational system would lead to serious consequences. For this reason, we understand that to work with ethno-research or participatory research in the Cuban case is a bit delicate, because the negotiation with local experts may potentially have affected the analysis. Hence, it was very important to triangulate the data since the local experts represented a specific, State-controlled viewpoint.

During the fieldwork, the plan of action was thought and designed by a group of primary educational specialists. In the figure 4 below, from right to left, it is possible to see a meeting with me, presented in the introduction chapter and throughout this study as ‘we’ due to my Afro-Indigenous background; Afonso Cok, the methodologist of the Cuban Ministry of Education; Maité Garcia, the chief of the primary cycle; Olga Jimenez, our Olguita that we affectionately called “Chiclé”, *chewing gum* in English, because she was in charge of following our steps inside the school investigated. Olga Jimenez was also responsible for the local teachers staff. In this meeting, the plan of action was discussed and therefore established to visit the primary school, Pedro Domingo Murillo in the Ciudad Libertad – municipality of Marianao in Havana – Cuba. In other words, during the meeting, we decided how, when, and with whom we would visit the school to collect the required data.





Fig. 4 Meeting with primary educational specialists (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)

Likewise, the translation of the research questions and the interview guide questions, and objectives were discussed in the same meeting. The Cuban educational specialists understood that there was a couple of linguistic problems in the interview guides and then decided to help us translating them from English to Cuban Spanish. Indeed, this was a very delicate moment, because the chief of primary cycle and vice-principal, Maite Garcia, was the one in charge of helping us to translate the interview guides for the Cuban pupils. During the meeting, our different understandings of the term “local knowledges” became evident. Markedly, Maite Garcia insisted to use the term “local history”, but after some negotiation she accepted to use the term “local knowledges”.

A couple of changes has been done during the fieldwork, most of those changes were on the questions, either research questions or questions in the guideline interviews. This was possible only because we decided to analyze the data while we were gathering it together still in the fieldwork. Furthermore, since this is social research, the researcher is also part of the world being investigated once he or she is involved in the process for change. For this reason, it is relevant to describe the exchange of local knowledges during one of the visits in the Primary School Pedro Domingo Murillo. According to Cohen et al. (2011, p. 37), we understand that participatory researchers should intervene in the fieldwork in order to bring changes. Therefore, the rationale for this cultural exchange is based on our understanding to raise awareness of the importance of implementing local knowledges that could also represent the plurality of Afro-Indigenous knowledges. The figure 5 below shows our presentation of Capoeira Angola for the Cuban primary pupils.



Fig. 5 Demonstration of Capoeira Angola from Brazil (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)

As a defender of local knowledges in schools in Brazil, we made a demonstration of Capoeira Angola for primary pupils. Capoeira Angola is an Afro-Brazilian cultural manifestation that came to Brazil as a sort of dance, but soon became a fight in order to liberate the enslaved blacks from the Portuguese regime of slavery. Nowadays it is commonly seen among its practitioners as a game. In this mix of game, dance, and fight, we use the instruments to make music and call the spirits of our ancestors for the ritual called *roda*, the ritual in which we play music at the same time that players go through the game.

In the book *Cuban Festivals: A Century of Afro-Cuban Culture* by Bettelheim and Ortiz (2001, p. 59), the scholars claim that Cuba has a very similar cultural manifestation to what is known in Brazil as Capoeira Angola or simply Capoeira. They say that “[...] according to some researchers, *maní* also referred to a popular martial art cognate with the Afro-Brazilian *Capoeira* [...]” (p. 59). The so-called *juego de maní* is said to mean *game of war* possibly in Lucumi language, nevertheless there is controversy about its origins. Similarly to Capoeira, *maní* also derives from the Kongo Angola culture and it was used by slaves to disguise fighting practice as a form of dance.

Overall, we understand that with the creation of the new Cuban national cultural based on Fidelism, many Afro-Indigenous local knowledges have been forgotten. Unfortunately, *maní* is an Afro-Cuban cultural manifestation that seems to disappear slowly, since the local government has not taken any attitude to revitalize this local knowledge. During the fieldwork in Cuba, we could not find any expression of *maní* not even on the streets of Havana or in the countryside. On the other hand, we found a couple of Capoeira groups, mainly, in Havana.

## 4.2 Access

This section describes how we managed to get access to gatekeepers, informants, and finally the school during the fieldwork in Havana - Cuba. The narrative style in this section represents the stages and difficulties we went through in order to get official permission to undertake our research in the target community. Likewise it also shows the influence of our Afro-Indigenous background in telling stories.

To get access to schools in Cuba it was a great journey, indeed. We came to the fieldwork aware of the possibility of having no access to schools. By this time, this study had been designed to be under the perspective of comparative education theory. It was aimed to be a comparative study about the implementation of local knowledges in the Primary School in Brazil and Cuba. Thus, we had been advised by our supervisor to work hard as we could in Brazil, in the City of Salvador, in order to have the necessary data for the completion of this study. Fortunately, we managed to get access to the right gatekeepers who directed us to the informants. According to Cohen et al. (2007, p. 123), there is also a big possibility for gatekeepers to block access. We agree with Cohen et al. when they affirm that gatekeepers can modify or control the direction of the research in the direction of their own interests.

Nevertheless, we argue that in the Cuban case, there is also a potential for informants, educational specialists, to direct the research towards their own interests that are aligned with the interest of the Cuban Ministry of Education. Therefore, we had to assume a very sensitive role in perceiving any possibility of biased information by the informants. Thus, we had to analyze carefully what was said by the informants and then check what it really was on the ground. Despite the problematic issue of possible biased informants, we still think that the information presented in this study is quite reliable, because it is supported by videos, photographs, other scholars, and my own observations in the fieldwork.

In line with Macedo (2012, p. 83), we understand that a researcher who seeks comprehension and a thick description of cultural contexts should adopt an opening and inclusive perspective allowing the field itself to speak. Macedo adds that the interpersonal relationships in the field enable the researcher to see the best ways to perform an ethnographic study.

The first contact with the Cuban educational specialists was extremely frustrating. We had been informed about the unwillingness of Cuban educational specialists in sharing

specific information with foreigners. Indeed, the first contact we had was through a former informant of our supervisor who sent us to the local University of Pedagogy. Thus, the educational specialist in charge told us that we would have to pay for a “pasantía”, a sort of internship, for a week with the value of 150 USD. Of course, as an ideological leftist and supporter of the Cuban revolution we got extremely frustrated with the capitalistic approach they had. But then we realized that such an approach was for any foreigner interested in their “great treasure”. Nevertheless, we could not pay the “pasantía” due our student status.

By this time we were quite frustrated in our *casa particular*<sup>9</sup>, when the owner invited us for coffee and told about her history as a former primary teacher in the Cuban system and why she decided to change occupation. As Macedo (2012, p. 83) advises, we decided to let the field speak out. During the coffee, Mrs. Vilma, the owner of the “casa particular”, told us her history as a primary teacher and how and why she moved to the tourism sector. Soon, we noticed that our gatekeepers and potential informants were closer than we thought. Mrs. Vilma introduced us to a man, the former sub-director of the primary system in Havana and her neighbor, Perondo Domingo, who turned into our first informant and gatekeeper as well.

In the first interview, Perondo explained the whole primary system in Cuba as well as his history as a Cuban educational specialist. Perondo also told us why he decided to leave his successful career in Cuba to work in the civil construction market in the United States. Even though Cohen et al. (2011, p. 143) advises that researchers have to take sampling decisions early in the overall planning of a research, the situational context in Cuba did not enable us to do so. Rather, we had to go for feasible opportunities in the fieldwork. Indeed, the first informants became a convenience sampling also called by Cohen et al. (p. 155) accidental or opportunity sampling, for it involved the nearest individuals that served as respondents until the required sample size was obtained, available or accessible.

In the second interview, Perondo, the former sub-director of the primary system in Havana, advised us to book a meeting with the vice-minister of the Cuban education, Cira Piñero, at the Cuban Ministry of Education. As expected, the waiting time was really long due to the busy agenda of the vice-minister. But, Piñero kept her words and then we had a meeting where we had to explain the objectives of the research proposal. In the beginning, they were a

---

<sup>9</sup> *Casa de Particular* is the Cuban phrase for bed and breakfasts or private homestays, it comes from the fact that everything else (from hotels to industries) is owned by the government, i.e. it is not private. *Casa particular* exactly means "private house".

little bit skeptical of a Brazilian student researching for a Norwegian university, but soon, she put us in contact with the methodologist of the Cuban Ministry of Education, Afonso Cok, who planned the whole week of visit to the Primary School Pedro Domingo Murillo in Ciudad Libertad – municipality of Marianao in Havana. By that time, we were not allowed for an extended period of observation due to the busy agenda of the educational specialists who would assist us at that time. Likewise, the Cuban educational authorities understood that our presence in the school could disturb the school's daily routine.

We assume that to some extent our access was then facilitated due to the solid relationship that the Brazilian government through the representation of Lula, the Brazilian former-president, had built up with Castro's regime since 2003. But, we had to be insistent to have the necessary access. During the time we were in fieldwork, the impeached president Dilma Rouseff<sup>10</sup> was then in charge of keeping international relations with Cuba. After having met the vice-minister of education, things got much easier for the development of the research. The local educational specialists understood that our research would not be a threat to the Cuban revolutionary education, rather it could even explain and therefore promote the local Primary Educational System of the socialist revolution.

Thus, at first, we were not allowed to take any picture inside the school. This decision caused a big problem, because one of the approaches we had planned was to use the short-term ethnography from Pink and Morgan (2013, p. 5) who advise researchers to use video observations due to the little time in the fieldwork. However, during the visits, Afonso Cok understood our argument that we were in fact interested in recording the local knowledges and not the primary pupils themselves.

Moreover, we understood that in order to have access to the schools, a translated letter<sup>11</sup> from Oslo University College was required. Then, we were also required to give them our research proposal translated from English to “Castellano” or the so-called Spanish language, so that they could see our intentions working with the Cuban Primary Educational System. After the whole process of explaining the research goals, we got fully access to one school, the school Pedro Domingo Murillo in Ciudad Libertad – municipality of Marianao in Havana.

Nevertheless, it was a school chosen by the methodologist of the Cuban Ministry of

---

<sup>10</sup> Re-elected president in 2014 for a democratic government and currently overthrown by a juridical coup d'état.

<sup>11</sup> See appendix I for translated letter for fieldwork.

Education, Afonso Cok. Cok and Perondo claim that the schools follow a national curriculum throughout the island, and that the only difference might be the different local knowledges implemented in different contexts. Personally, we did not agree with the decision of just visiting one school, because we wanted to investigate two other Primary Schools in the center of Havana. This first choice was made, because this study meant to be a comparative one, thus the schools to visit should be similar to the sample we had during the fieldwork in Salvador da Bahia - Brazil.

As cited previously, Cohen et al. (2007, p. 123) highlight the possibility of gatekeepers to interfere in the course of the research. Having understood that, we got very skeptical by the fact that the local authorities did not allow us to choose the schools to be investigated. Rather, they sent us to a school in the neighborhood of Marianao in Ciudad Libertad, the Primary School Pedro Domingo Murillo. Soon, we found out that it was a reference school that had close ties with UNESCO. From this perspective, we assume that the decision of the Cuban Ministry of Education in choosing the school to be investigated might have influenced considerably the analysis of this study. We shall come back to this issue in the analysis chapter.

### 4.3 Sampling

In this section, we describe the sampling chosen to carry out this social research. As stated in the previous section, the first sampling was taken strategically as a convenience sampling so that we could reach the desired ones. Afterwards, in line with Bryman (2004, p. 88), we made the use of non-random sampling in order to gather a coherent data that would allow us to focus on the selected group. The figure 6 below shows the types of samplings as well as the list of informants.

Informants 1	Non-random sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fifth Grade Primary Pupils</li> </ul>
Informants 2	Convenience sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mrs. Vilma (The owner of the casa particular and former primary teacher)</li> <li>• Perondo Domingo (The former sub-director of the Cuban Primary Educational System)</li> <li>• Roberto Bueno (Student's parent and the president of the parent's council)</li> </ul>
Informants 3	Non-random sampling	<p><b>Fifth grade teachers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reina Nunez</li> <li>• Yuneisy Hernandez</li> <li>• Mercedes Benitez</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caridad Robio</li> </ul> <p><b>Non-teachers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afonso Cok (The methodologist of the Cuban Ministry of Education)</li> <li>• Alina Verde (The school principal)</li> <li>• Maité Garcia (the chief of the primary cycle and vice-principal)</li> <li>• Anaire Ortega (the local chief of education)</li> </ul>
--	--	---

Fig. 6 Lists with types of samplings and informants. (By Thiago Nascimento)

Thus, we managed to have three different types of informants. The first ones are those who can speak for themselves with a certain limitation due to their age, the pupils in primary school at the level of fifth grade <sup>12</sup>. Notably, we did not reveal their names due to their ages and for ethical issues and also as demanded by the Ministry of Education. We understand that this specific group, the fifth grade of primary school, can represent a significant number of individuals in the society. However, it became very difficult to gather information from the interviews with this group due to their ages and the complexity of the theme.

Indeed, the data collected from this group was taken during our observations when they were being exposed to local knowledges. In relation to the interview, we prepared an interview guide with basic questions in order to check whether their responses matched the information given by the other informants as a means to increase reliability. Likewise, the group interview with this sampling was also observed by a member of the Ministry of Education, Olga Jimenez. Possibly, her presence made the students a bit shy to answer the questions from the interview guide. As a result, the data collected from the group interview with this sampling was not so relevant for the purpose of this study, except for raising reliability.

In the second group, as discussed in the previous section, we included two gatekeepers who became informants along the course of this study. They were regarded as convenience sampling as found in Cohen et al. (2011, p. 155). Actually, they were former educational specialists who have migrated to other occupations for economic reasons. With this second sampling we allowed ourselves to let the fieldwork speak as Macedo (2012, p. 83) advises. Thus, we did not organize an interview guide for all of the informants in this group. For instance, most of the information gathered with the former primary teacher and currently owner of a “casa particular”, Mrs. Vilma, was during open conversations. With her consent,

---

<sup>12</sup> See appendix II for interview guide with fifth grade students.

we recorded parts of our conversations and took notes. Most of the information provided by Mrs. Vilma was used to raise the reliability of this study, since she did not give details about her ideological background.

On the other hand, with Perondo Domingo, the former sub-director of the Cuban Primary School, we needed to prepare a semi-structured interview<sup>13</sup>. If not, we might have gathered unnecessary data. Domingo was a very helpful informant who helped us to get in contact with the vice-minister of education Cira Piñero. Perondo Domingo seemed very proud of the Cuban Primary Educational System and his ideological background seemed to be in line with the emphasis given by the Cuban socialist government on educational issues. Finally, the third informant regarded as convenience sampling was a student's parent and the local parent's council president<sup>14</sup>, Roberto Bueno.

We perceived the third sampling group as the main one in regards to interviews, because the current educational specialists were able to provide arguments to assert their position in relation to the current situation of the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System. They were divided in non-teachers and teachers<sup>15</sup>. In line with Cohen et al. (2004, p. 116), we understand that researchers ought to be very careful with volunteer sampling, because volunteers may have different reasons for volunteering. From this understanding, we decided to restrict the category of teacher informants to those facilitators only teaching the fifth grade of the school investigated. Thus, we interviewed all teachers from the fifth grade who were present in the school during the fieldwork.

Furthermore, it is extremely relevant for this study to remember that the main informants, specially, the current Cuban educational specialists, were regarded in this study as experts, since they were the ones who have been in the Cuban educational context. Indeed, this was an attempt to reduce the power relation between the researcher and the informants. Nevertheless, we underline the possibility of bias in the speeches of the educational specialists. First, because they seemed to be very coherent in providing answers. Second, because the understanding among all the educational specialists teachers or non-teachers is that they represent the Cuban State.

---

<sup>13</sup> See appendix V for interview guide question for Perondo Domingo.

<sup>14</sup> See appendix VI for interview guide questions for Roberto Bueno.

<sup>15</sup> See appendix III for interview guide with educational specialists for non-teachers and appendix IV for interview guide educational specialists for teachers.



## 4.4 Ethical Issues

This section describes the approach we had to deal with ethical issues during the fieldwork. The main concern in this research was to do no harm to the communities under study. Following this ethical imperative, we have worked with informed consent which has been defined by Diener and Crandall (as cited in Cohen et al. 2011) as “[...] the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions” (p.78). Furthermore, informed consent is also considered a cornerstone of ethical behaviors as asserted by Howe and Moses (as cited in Cohen et al. 2011, p. 77). In fact, it respects the right of individuals to exert control over their lives and to take decisions for themselves.

Particularly, we understood that there is no possibility of performing the data collection in a Cuban Primary School without a proper informed consent. For this reason, our role as a researcher was overt. Even though Hammsersley et al. (1995, p. 265) argue that researchers are likely not to tell people what they are studying and the details about their research, we state that it is not possible to access specific data among Cuban educational authorities without telling the purpose of that research. Indeed, no foreigner is allowed to get into a school without a formal permission from the Cuban Ministry of Education. Thus to inform what will be done is just the first step, the second one is to be allowed or not to go further with the research. Nevertheless, it is clear that some information that contributed to this study has also been collected during informal encounters with local people.

As a “semi-insider” due to our nationality<sup>16</sup>, but as a researcher who had full participation in the activities and plans for the research, we managed to keep an informed consent, because it protected us if something went wrong during the data collection. In other words, the informed consent placed responsibility also on the participants during the data collection, informants and gatekeepers. For this reason, we decided to have the informed consent throughout the phases of this study. For instance, we were not allowed by the vice minister, Cira Piñero, to record the pupils performing the local knowledges, but after getting to know better the methodologist, Cok, under the decision of the Cuban Ministry of Education he allowed us to go on with the video observations and the photographs. However, we had to convince Cok first that the research would not bring any harm at all, neither for the Cuban

---

<sup>16</sup> Nationality is a marked characteristic among Cubans. The fact that we were not Cubans made us a semi-insider in that social context.

pupils nor for the Cuban Primary Educational System. The necessity of recording was then due to the short time allotted and to increase the validity of the data collected during the fieldwork.

In order to run the research project, we considered some other ethical concerns. In addition to the main concern, informed consent, we also intended to inform the participants who would see the data report. Thus, we aimed to keep the data collection restricted to professional matters of the research and for future works under the Comparative Education field between Brazil and Cuba. This attitude aimed to bring benefits with the knowledge produced for both communities. Hence, we needed to build up rapport with Cuban educational specialists so that they could trust our intentions and goals with this study. Consequently, we could work together with full transparency. In the end, most of the participants agreed to identify themselves as a mean to raise the validity of their statements. Nonetheless, we decided to keep the decision of not identifying the pupils. In fact, this decision had been taken from the very beginning.

Even though we also acknowledge that informants have the right for privacy, anonymity, confidentiality and non-traceability, in line with Brock-Utne (1996, p. 618), we aimed to assure an ecological validity by providing as much information as possible about the school investigated and informants with the exception of the primary pupils. This study has no intention to bring any harm to the community researched, rather to comprehend and problematize the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System. Therefore, the revelation of the school name as well as the name of the informants could also raise the reliability of the study and the authenticity of the Cuban Primary Educational System in implementing local knowledges. Furthermore, in line with Cohen et al. (2011, p. 77) we understand that participants had the right to withdraw whenever they want from a research.

This research project had as its main sample children being exposed to local knowledges in classrooms or outside depending on the activities. As a researcher may know, this implies a specific consideration, because we would need either the responsible consent of the children's parents or a representative consent of the principal in the schools. The latter was enough to perform the data collection, actually the school principal, Alina Verde, was just following the orders of the Cuban Ministry of Education. Even though we did not have access to the formal letter from the Cuban Ministry of Education, we were told that this

document had been given to Alina Verde, the school principal, by Afonso Cok, the primary methodologist.

Finally, the last concern about ethical issues was related to a very important question for a qualitative research, validity. At the beginning of this research, we had assumed that all the informants would have the chance to verify the transcription of their statements in every stage of the fieldwork. Nevertheless, it was impossible to do so, because Cubans still have difficulties in having access to internet. Some of them did not have access to a telephone either, thus this process of verifying the transcriptions became a great challenge and impossible. Hence, the validity of the data collected relied on the video observation, photos displayed throughout this study, in the triangulation of different methods of collecting the required data, and finally as discussed previously with full description of the school and informants as Brock-Utne (1996, p. 618) states.

## **4.5 Methods for data collection**

This section describes the multi-method approach we employed to collect the required data for this study. According to Bryman (2004, p. 275), the multi-method approach allows the researchers to triangulate techniques as well as cross-check information. In addition to that, Bryman argues that this sort of approach guarantees the reliability and validity to a certain extent provided that we used video observations and photographs, semi-structured interviews, and document analyses. Thus, Bryman agrees with Geertz (1973 p. 311/312) that a multi- method approach is able to provide thick descriptions. Furthermore, we explain why we used such an approach according to Pink and Morgan (2013, p. 4/5) and their concept of short-term ethnography.

### **4.5a Interviews in terms of qualitative research**

In this section, we describe the challenge we had to establish the kind of interviews we would use with the informants. First of all, we acknowledge that it was not easy to separate our role as a participant and interviewer. Hamersley et al. (1995) argue that “[...] the dividing line between participant observation and interviewing is hard to discern” (p. 139). For this reason, we decided to have semi-structured interviews so that we could interfere whether the

conversation was leading to a different direction or when important elements came up to during the conversations.

In line with Kvale (1996, p. 27), we understand that it was not the case to have an open conversation nor a highly structured questionnaire, except the convenience sampling and therefore an informal conversation with Mrs. Vilma, the owner of the “casa particular”. Thus Kvale argues that the interviews should be “[...] conducted according to an interview guide that focuses on certain themes and that may include suggested questions” (p. 27).

During the fieldwork in Cuba, with the exception of the case presented above, we used semi-structured interviews in order to collect data from individuals and groups. Then, we conducted individual interviews with eleven individuals. Among them, ten individuals were educational specialists with different functions in the Cuban State such as teachers, methodologist, school principal, chief of cycle, local director of education and others<sup>17</sup>. And one semi-structured interview was with the parent’s council president. In addition to that, we also had three group interviews with the fifth grade teachers and two more interviews with two different groups of students that we called group A and B. We regard all of those interviews as formal, since they were arranged by the Cuban Ministry of Education. Interestingly, informal conversations with the specialists also contributed to this study. Nevertheless they rather served to cross-check the data collected.

During the semi-structured interviews, we used different interview guides<sup>18</sup>. We did not use translator for the interviews, because we have some knowledge of the local language spoken in Cuba. Instead, in line with Pink and Morgan (2013, p. 5), we used audio recordings and video observations due to the little time in the fieldwork. This decision helped us to explore the audios as well as the verbal and non-verbal of the video observations even after the fieldwork.

Overall, the use of semi-structured interviews opened up for unexpected information. According to Kvale (1996, p. 6) semi-structured interviews have the purpose of obtaining the description of the interviewee’s world with respect to the interpretations of the investigated phenomena. Thus, most of the interviews were carried inside the Primary School Pedro Murillo Domingo with the exception of the interview with Perondo Domingo who is a former

---

<sup>17</sup> See appendix IX to see the list of informants.

<sup>18</sup> See appendix II for interview guide with fifth grade students, appendix III for interview guides with educational specialists - non-teachers, appendix IV for interview guides with educational specialists - teachers, appendix V for interview guide with former sub-director of primary school, and appendix VI for interview guide with the parents’ council president.

worker of the Cuban State and Mrs. Vilma, the owner of the “casa particular”. For this reason, those interviews were carried out in their houses in the neighborhood “Centro Habana”, in the center of Havana.

The group interviews were carried out with the primary fifth grade teachers and two groups of students. In both interviews, there was the presence of the school principal Alina Verde and a member of the Cuban Ministry of Education responsible for the local teachers staff, Olga Jimenez. Even though, the school principal did not interfere, we noticed that the teachers once in a while tried to find confirmation signs from the principal about their statements. Particularly, we understand the presence of the school principal as potential threat to the legitimacy of the teachers’ statements since they might not feel comfortable in describing possible discrepancies of the implementation of local knowledges in that school. In line with Kvale et al. (2009, p. 150), we argue that focus group should encourage the expression of a variety of views, but in that case we understand that the presence of principal might have impacted on the content of the interviews.

#### **4.5b Participant observation**

This section describes our role as participant observer during the fieldwork in Cuba. As stated previously, according to Cohen et al. (2007, p. 196) we assumed an overt role as a researcher, because it was impossible to have access to a Cuban Primary school without a formal permission. Given the focus of this study which is the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System, we had to make observations inside and outside the school classes. For instance, the local knowledges that come from the school subject Artistic Education were performed in the Arts Institute of Ciudad Libertad.

Being a participant observer helped us to establish rapport with the informants and therefore it opened up the gates for us to immerse in the social world of the research. Even though we were a “semi-insider” due to our nationality, the fact that we could speak their language and that we are from Brazil, a friend country to Cuba, facilitated the intercultural encounter. Another aspect that might have facilitated the intercultural encounter and therefore our status as a semi-insider was our phenotype, in particular, our color skin. Being an Afro-Indigenous from Brazil made us very alike the Afro-Cuban citizens.

Finally, in line with Hamersley et al. (1995, p. 8), we noticed that the role of being a participant observer gave us the opportunity to learn more about the Cuban culture. By this time, we had to negotiate our own perspective upon the theme investigated by assuming the local perspective to a certain extent. Moreover, we made use of participatory research and therefore we agree with Cohen et al. (2011) when the scholars assert that “The essence of participatory research, as its names suggests, is participation, the equal control of the research by both participants and researchers and the movement towards change through empowerment” (p. 38).

#### **4.5c Document analysis**

This section describes the official documents we analyzed during and after the fieldwork. Notably, the main document we used was the ‘Programas: Quinto Grado’ (2015), because, it is a curricular document that states the purpose and objectives of the school subjects for the Cuban Primary Educational System.

Throughout the fieldwork other documents were also analyzed, but they are not referenced in this study. Thus, we understood that they had no relevance to the theme here investigated which is the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System. The other documents are; i.e. ‘Reglamento del Trabajo Metodologico del Ministerio de Educacion: Educacion Primaria’ (2013-2014), ‘Reglamento Escolar: Escuela Primaria : Pedro Domingo Murillo’ (2015-2016).

#### **4.5d Reliability and validity**

This section describes the process we used to increase the level of reliability and validity of this study. Cohen et al. (2007, p. 141) argue that triangulation of methods is a powerful way to demonstrate validity. Cohen et al. add that “[...] the use of two or more methods for data collection in the aspect of human behavior” (p. 141). Thus, we argue that it was actually a necessity to use a methodological triangulation in studying the Cuban Primary Educational System, for we had to use different methods to certify the information given by the educational specialists. For instance, when we have been told that local knowledges were implemented in the Cuban Primary Educational System, we had to check this information in

the curricular document 'Programa: Quinto Grado' (2015) and therefore double check with video observations and photographs.

In line with Bryman (2004) the study refers to validity as “[...] the issue of whether an indicator or (set of indicators) that is devised to gauge a concept really measures that concept” (p. 72). Therefore, we understand that the use of a methodological triangulation increases validity. In line with Cohen et al. (2007, p. 137), we were extremely concerned with the possibility of bias in the data collected. We therefore decided to be very careful with the sampling so that it could ensure its representativeness. Nevertheless, we wonder if it is possible to get rid of the bias, since the Cuban Primary Educational System is very effective in conveying the socialist/communist discourse among their representatives. Under this circumstance, we would rather state that there is a sort of uniformity in the message conveyed by the educational specialists, because they see themselves as the representation of the Cuban State. Thus, we assume that this uniformity might be already biased.

Moreover, we also agree with Brock-Utne (1996) when she states that

“In order to ensure high ecological validity it is necessary that as many characteristics as possible the school in question are given. This means, number, training, age, gender composition of the staff, the number of the students, subjects combination, grades, resources at the disposal of the school, and so on. But the characteristics are given for each school the easier it becomes to identify the school and the more difficult to secure the anonymity some schools would like to have” (Brock-Utne, 1996, p. 618).

Nevertheless, we assume that in the Cuban case, the Ministry of Education is indeed willing to show their socialist education to the world and therefore to reveal the name of the school investigated would not be a problem. Cok, the primary methodology, asserted that “The education constitutes an element to show the superiority of our system, the socialist system” (Afonso Cok, personal communication, September, 2015). Hence, we understood that the revelation of the school name and informants would bring no harm to the community investigated, rather it would ensure the authenticity of the Cuban Primary Educational System and at the same time raise validity and therefore the reliability of this study.

In line with Bryman (2004, p. 71) we understand reliability as the overall consistency of a measure. It is a process of test-retest method that analyzes the degree of correlation between tests. As one may know, reliability is often associated with quantitative research. During the fieldwork, we noticed the necessity to have more interviews with the primary teachers, because of the influence of the school principal's presence. Hence, we wonder if we would

have the same answers from the teachers, if the school principal had not been present during the semi-structured interviews.

In order to create that opportunity, we asked permission to continue with the observations in the school during the two last weeks of our presence in Cuba. Nevertheless, we were not allowed to be in the school any longer. The primary methodologist, Afonso Cok, and the school principal, Alina Verde, were of the opinion that our presence would disturb the school routine.

#### **4.5e Short-Term Ethnography**

In this section, we describe how we managed to perform an ethnographic research in a short period of time. First of all, it is relevant to state that we were not allowed to be in the Primary School Pedro Murillo Domingo more than a week. Thus, it implies that great part of the research was also conducted outside the school. Indeed, our fieldwork started since the very first day in Havana. In line with Macedo (2012, p. 51), we understood that we should let the fieldwork speak. In other words, we decided to be aware of any information related to the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System.

Thus, as stated previously, there was actually a challenge to fulfill the goals of this study due to the little time given to collect data in the chosen school. Notably, Afonso Cok, the primary methodologist, allowed us to visit the school no more than a week<sup>19</sup>. For this reason, we decided to work with short-time ethnography so that we could reach our goals in collecting the data needed during the fieldwork in a short period of time. As stated in the analysis chapter, the findings generated from the semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and video-observations helped us to discuss the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System. Thus we triangulated the different ways of data collection in order to raise the validity and reliability of the analysis.

Pink and Morgan (2013, p. 4/5) in their work *Short-Term Ethnography: Intense Routes to Knowing*, state that short-term ethnography seeks primarily to understand the situational context. Pink and Morgan (p. 3) affirm that to create this intensity of data, video observation is an important approach in focused ethnography. Thereafter, these videos are closely

---

<sup>19</sup> See appendix VII for work schedule planned and discussed by fifth grade facilitators, Afonso Cok, and us.



analyzed and therefore create a data immersion which is brought forth at the analytical stage of the ethnography. Pink and Morgan argue that the use of video observation is highly recommended for short-term ethnography, because the researcher can have an overview of verbal and non-verbal activities in the classrooms afterwards.

Moreover, the authors argue that it is useful to go beyond observation to create short-term engagements that benefit from production of forms of intensity, empathy, and ongoing ethnographic-analytical theoretical dialogue. Pink and Morgan assert that this kind of perspective involves asking participants what they might think that are relevant questions for the research. Such an approach is in line with Macedo (2012, p. 51) when the scholar advises researchers to establish rapport with the informants and therefore let the fieldwork speak.

In our point of view, this approach was fundamental for this study, because of the time allotted for gathering data as well as our acknowledgement of the necessity of balancing the power relation between the researcher and informants. Hence, we think that it was very exciting to discuss with the Cuban educational specialists what we should change in our interview guide questions and what to include as questions. In the end, we had to negotiate a lot, but one of the arguments of Maite Garcia, for instance, was that there are cultural differences and for this reason some words should be adapted to the local language so that they can make sense in the Cuban context.

Even though the Cuban Spanish is close to the Brazilian version of Portuguese, we accept that we had some language limitations. Nevertheless the video observations helped us to cope with the linguistic difficulties, since we could analyze the verbal and non-verbal expressions as many times as we wanted afterwards. In line with Cohen et al. (2007, p. 123), we understand the translation of the research questions from English to Cuban Spanish was a very delicate issue, because at the same time we had to analyze to what extent the influence of Cuban specialists could lead the research to the results they wanted, specially, in accordance with the principles of the socialist revolution.

## **4.6 Challenges**

In this section, we describe the challenges we faced during the fieldwork in Cuba. As described previously, the main concern about this research was whether we would have access to the Primary Schools or not. From the very beginning, we were told by our supervisor that the Cuban government was very protective of their children. Since we were

investigating the Primary School, we ran the risk of not getting any access at all to their schools as well as to specific information. After overcoming the first challenge, we had to deal with very restricted rules to enter the Primary Schools. Thus, the main challenge became the limited period of time we had to gather the data in the school.

As stated before, when we were doing fieldwork, we were still aiming to perform a comparative study between Brazil and Cuba. For this reason, we had collected the necessary data during the fieldwork in Salvador da Bahia – Brazil. By this time, we had planned to collect data for four weeks in both settings. Nevertheless, when we got in Cuba it took almost three weeks to get the formal permission from the Cuban Ministry of Education. The plan of visiting the Primary Schools for four weeks was not possible anymore since we got the permission to be just one week in the school chosen and we had only two more weeks in the fieldwork. Interestingly, in the week we visited in the school, we were exposed to many activities<sup>20</sup> that generated a lot of data. After the fieldwork, we noticed that we had enough data to focus only on the Cuban context. The data collected in Brazil was then kept for later studies.

Besides all the challenges exposed, there was another one that brought us a big surprise. The economic status as a student almost made us come back before the time planned. Cuba was extremely expensive for students, specially, for an Afro-Indigenous Brazilian. Thus, in many different situations, we had to pretend and behave as a Cuban citizen so that we would pay for food and basic needs with the local currency, “Pesos Cubanos”, instead of “C.U.C.”<sup>21</sup>. In regards to this situation, our skin complexion and our knowledge of the local language were determining factors to assume such a role in some specific situations on the streets of Havana and in the countryside.

---

<sup>20</sup> See appendix VII for the plan of activities during the week visit at the investigated school.

<sup>21</sup> CUC is one of two official currencies in use in Cuba, the other being the convertible peso (ISO 4217 code: CUC, occasionally called "dollar" in the spoken language). There are currently 25 CUP per CUC.

## 5.0 Analysis

In the analysis chapter, we discuss the findings from the semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and video-observations in relation to the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Education System. Thus we triangulate the different ways of data collection in order to raise the validity and reliability of the analysis. Furthermore, we state that this analysis does not have the pretension of investigating the universal truth of the theme, rather in line with Hall et al. (1995, p. 597/598) we seek for the moment of reality in which this study was thought and therefore developed during the fieldwork.

Notably, this study is conscious of the power relation in the knowledge production. It is therefore reasonable to recognize and give voice to the local understanding of what we consider as “local knowledges”. Furthermore, in line with Cohen et al. (2007, p. 123) we highlight the possibility of gatekeepers and informants to interfere in the course of the research. As discussed in the methodology chapter, we understand that the decision of the Cuban Ministry of Education to choose the Primary School Pedro Domingo Murillo might have influenced the analysis of the data collected during the fieldwork. Nevertheless, despite the problematic issue of potential biased informants, we think that the data collected during the fieldwork is quite reliable. First, because all the information gathered is supported by video observations. Second, this analysis also relies on the information provided by other scholars.

Strategically, we have decided not to have a chapter only with the findings in order to avoid repetitions. Hence, we aimed to present and therefore discuss the findings along with the theories generated from the data collection. As already discussed in the methodology chapter, we carry out the principle of preferred literature. It means that although we have mainly used a Marxist method to collect data, we do not identify ourselves as Marxists, rather as Afro-Indigenous. For this reason, we have also used a local method called ethno-research by Macedo (2012) as an attempt to decolonize this research and balance the power in the production of knowlegdes. From this perspective, we firmly state that our motivation to perform this research lies on our Pan-Africanist principles to resist colonialism and imperialism, but before that we first fight racism. Hence, it is enhancing to research a country that seems to take good care of our Afro and Indigenous children at the present time.

## **The Uniqueness of the Cuban Primary Educational System**

This study explores the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System. Hence, in line with Marx (1859/1904, p. 122) we explore the implementation of local knowledges not as the starting point, rather as a synthesis of a long process of educational reforms in the Cuban Primary Educational System. Thus, we made an investigation in the historical process of the social phenomenon, the presence of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System, in order to find out contradictions of what seemed to be the most concrete or visible at first. Likewise, as Macedo (2012, p. 51) advises we simply let the fieldwork speak.

This chapter is divided into two main sections that we called Part I and Part II and their subsections that aim to facilitate the understanding for the reader. Hence, in Part I, we first explore the presence of local elements that makes the CPES unique in Latin America. Thus, we discuss systematically the implementation of local knowledges found in the Primary School Pedro Domingo Murillo. Likewise, we pay a special attention to the absence of the plurality of Afro-Indigenous knowledges in the school investigated. After that, we discuss how the Cuban Primary Educational System departs from GAE as it takes place in poor countries of the global South. In the Part II, we first explore the different aspects of the de-alienation process through the implementation of local knowledges in CPES. Therefore, we attempt to make a suggestion in the field of Science Education that aims to localize the subject Mathematics. Finally, we underline the dilemma of ideology in CPES.

## Part I

### 5.1 The implementation of local knowledges in CPES

In this section, we explore the local knowledges found in the Primary School Pedro Domingo Murillo in Ciudad Libertad – Municipality of Marianao – Havana. Hence, we aimed to answer the first two research questions of this study which are first; to what extent are local knowledges introduced in the primary system in Cuba? a) if is it referred to as something exotic only, or b) as an alternative epistemological orientation; second, what are local knowledges according to the Cuban perspective? For that, we explored the findings along with the theories so that we could uphold a meaningful analysis.

Therein, we first explore systematically the local knowledges that came up from the Cuban hybrid tradition on education. Hence, we divided them into three categories; the local language, Artistic Education, and school subjects as seen in figure 7. Second, we build up a critique on the absence of the plurality of Afro-Indigenous cultural manifestations in the implementation of local knowledges in CPES. For this study, the absence of local knowledges related to the spirituality of traditional communities such as the Taínos and the Youruba indicates that other forms of local knowledges had been anyhow given privilege. Hence, it is relevant for this study to try to comprehend what caused the exclusion of local knowledges that are commonly related to spirituality i.e jogo de maní, Afro percussion and dances among others.

Local Knowledges in CPES	Elements	Local cultural Manifestations
Language	Cuban Spanish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cuban and Latin American Music</li> <li>• Cuban literary production</li> <li>• Cuban Theater</li> </ul>
Artistic Education	Creolized Dances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Danzón', 'Rumba', 'Chácháchá', 'Salsa', 'Baile'.</li> </ul>
	Cuban Fine Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawing Class and Ceramics</li> </ul>
Cubanized school subjects	History of Cuba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local history</li> </ul>
	Civic Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rescue of traditions and values for the maintenance of the socialist revolution</li> </ul>
	Labor Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General preparation for the social life</li> </ul>

Fig. 7 Local Knowledges found in the Primary School Pedro Domingo Murillo in Havana- Ciudad Libertad.

Before exploring the local knowledges found in the school investigated, it is necessary to state for the reader our understanding of the term implementation.

Thus, Florencio et al. (2014, p. 899) state that we should work effectively in order to guarantee our rights so that they do not get stuck in a piece of paper. Florencio et al. emphasize that our rights can be reached only if they are in fact implemented by the State. According to Ohweiler (2007), “Implementing public policies relates to the effectiveness of government action to make plans happen” (p. 288). Hence, it is clear that the presence of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System was indeed a governmental plan to formalize the local cultural manifestations in the Primary System. The video observations as well as the photos, fieldwork notes, and the semi-structured interviews with informants can confirm the presence of such local elements in CPES.

Finally, as stated previously in the theoretical framework chapter, this study is sensitive to the power relation in producing knowledge. For this reason, it is relevant to bring again the Cuban local view of local knowledges to this discussion.

Local knowledges are part of our pedagogic and psychological conception that the individual and his or her relations through social cycles and therefore, in this relation with the social cycle comes the importance that the study of the locality has, the place we live in, the place where the students and the family start their development in the neighborhood or community, in the city, and in the country. (Afonso Cok, personal communication, September, 2015)

Cok’s statement is in line with Banks (2010, p. 234) when the scholar argues that students learn best and are more highly motivated when the school curriculum reflects their cultures, experiences, and perspectives. Afonso Cok, the primary methodologist of the Cuban Ministry of Education, claims that the implementation of local knowledges is a pedagogical and psychological orientation generated from the nationalization of the primary curriculum. Nevertheless, the methodologist does not confirm that the implementation of local knowledges in CPES is actually an epistemological orientation. From this perspective, as it has been discussed in the section 3.1, we can infer that Cuban educational professionals do not advocate for the implementation of local knowledges as an element of a non-Western epistemology.

In turn, we focus now on one of the most problematic issue regarding the implementation of local knowledges in Primary Schools in the global South. We explore then the first local cultural element that enables the production of Cuban local knowledges, the local language.

### **5.1a Cuban Spanish Language: A Cuban local language?**

As mentioned previously, Jones (2007, p. 325) and Breidlid (2013, p. 2) understand that the hegemonic Western epistemology is the main element of GAE. Breidlid adds that the feeling of alienation is constructed based on the imposition of Western Knowledge and the lack of recognition of non-Western epistemologies. Ngugi (1986) states that “The physical violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom” (p. 9). Ngugi denounces the cultural violence imposed by the colonizing power in establishing a colonial language in the school systems of the colonies throughout the African continent.

In the Cuban case, the situation seems to differ from the examples given by Ngugi (1986) in the African continent. As mentioned previously, first, we understand that our ancestors have been enslaved and brought to Americas more than four hundred years ago. Second, during the slavery trade there were enslaved blacks from different parts of the African continent what made difficult to uphold their mother languages. Hence, the language of the colonizer became the vehicle of communication or ‘lingua franca’ among Blacks in diaspora in Cuba. Nevertheless, this language, ‘Castellano’ the so-called Spanish, now has been influenced and therefore appropriated by the Afro-Cubans as their own language, Cuban Spanish. Nevertheless, there are still differences between the vernacular language spoken at home (Cuban Spanish) and the language spoken and written at school (Spanish). Under this circumstance, we use the term ‘Cuban Spanish’ when related to an expression of local knowledges. This attitude is in accordance with our understanding of the Cuban local knowledges in general as creolized forms of cultural manifestations as it is seen with ‘Salsa’, ‘Danzon’, ‘Baile’, among others.

Essential to any understanding any nation and its culture, language is intricately involved with Cuban history and identity. Because of its colonial past, Spanish is the principal and official language of the island, but that does not mean that it was the only language spoken. Enslaved Africans brought to the island spoke languages that are still used in Cuba today, although in religious or ritual contexts, not as vernacular languages. (Miller, 2011, p. 535)

In line with Miller (2011, p. 535), we understand Cuban Spanish as the main vernacular language spoken in Cuba. In this way, we can infer that the feeling of alienation caused by the Western language (Spanish) in Cuba is not at the same extent if compared to the situation as exposed in Kenya by Ngugi where the vernacular languages i.e. Swahili and other ethnic group languages are completely different from the colonizing language, English. Even though, some scholars do not use the term Cuban Spanish to differ the vernacular language

from the official language Spanish, we think that it is necessary to address, in particular, the written form of Spanish as a Western and therefore alien element for Cuban pupils.

Indeed, during our visit to the school investigated in Havana, we perceived that Spanish was the language of instruction that served as the means of communication among facilitators and students. English was then taught as a second language. The differences between the vernacular language (Cuban Spanish) and the Spanish spoken and written in the school investigated are not that appalling. Those discrepancies do not impede the Cuban primary students to go through their learning process successfully as we can check at UNESCO's reports as in the figures 25, 26, and 27 in the section 5.2. The language spoken by the teachers during the classes observed was very close to the vernacular form if it was not indeed a mix of the official language form and the vernacular one. However, it became evident that the language in written form in the school's books and materials are closer to the European version.

After Spanish, Creole is the second most-spoken language in Cuba. Over 400,000 Cubans either speak it fluently, understand it but speak with difficulty, or have at least some familiarity with the language. It is mainly in those communities where Haitians and their descendant live that Creole is most spoken. In addition to the eastern provinces, there are also communities in Ciego de Avila and Camaguey provinces where the population still maintains Creole, their mother tongue. Classes in Creole are offered in Guantanamo, Matanzas and the City of Havana. There is a Creole-language radio program. (Hurlich, 1998, p. 1)

As mentioned above, Creole language is offered in neighborhoods where there is a considerable number of speakers. Nevertheless, this information needs to be confirmed on the ground. As we have stated throughout this study, we did not have access to any other school during the fieldwork. Likewise, in the school investigated we did not have any information whether any class was held in Creole language or whether any student spoke Creole language. Finally, Lucumi is understood here as a special language, a language that has lost its functions and servers as a secret language during Santería ceremonies. Moreover, the majority of Lucumi speakers are Afro-Cubans who have already appropriated the Cuban Spanish language as their mother language.

- **Cuban Spanish language and its musicality in CPES**

The presence of the Cuban local music in school enabled the pupils to immerse in of the greatest expression of the Cuban culture. During our visit to the school, the facilitators and students performed the chorus with the song 'El cuarto de Tula' *the room of Tula* often sung



by the worldwide known Cuban band 'Buena Vista Social Club'. The first contact with the expression of local knowledges touched us deeply, because of the harmony, melody, and the rhythm. The percussion with Afro-Cuban instruments reminded us the Afro-Brazilian musicality. The pupils were presenting as they were singing for a great audience in a concert. The pupils seemed to be very happy during the activity as in the figure 8.



Fig. 8 Music Class: Students forming for choir. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)

- **Cuban Spanish language in the literary production in CPES**

The second manifestation of local knowledges we have been exposed to was the class of Literal Production as seen in figure 9. During this class, students could express themselves by writing and reciting their poems related to national symbols i.e. la 'palomita blanca de Cuba' the white Cuban pigeon and 'la palma real' the royal palm among others. Likewise, students also had the chance to read poems from great personalities from Cuba such as Jose Martí. All the literary production was in the local language, Cuban Spanish.



Fig. 9 Literary Production. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)

- **Cuban Spanish Language in Theater Class in CPES**

During our visit to the school investigated, we could also see a theater class in the local Institute of Arts. We noticed that the theater in CPES has an educational goal in stressing the content Cuban students are exposed to. The Cuban Spanish language is a vibrant element of this local knowledge. In theater classes, students are able to rethink the historical facts their relatives and ancestors might have gone through. Besides that, students are able to develop their communicative skills by performing local heroes and martyrs. We understand the use of theater practices as a way to help aid the educational process. During this process, facilitators and students can create new strategies and objectives and therefore use the theater as a tool to consolidate their learning process as seen in figure 10 below.



Fig.10 Theater class. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)

Overall, Breidlid (2013) claims that “There is a sense of alienation when entering a primary school classroom where a colonial language is spoken [...]” (p. 2). Breidlid is in line with Brock-Utne (2014, p. 8) when the scholar argues for the use of a local language as the means of instruction. Brock-Utne states that “The best way to improve the learning outcomes of poor performers school would be to have them learn in the language they know best and normally speak” (p. 8). In line with Brock-Utne, we understand that no other language despite Cuban Spanish would be the best means of instruction for the great majority of Cuban pupils and Creole for the Hatian descendants. However, our focus here is in Cuban Spanish, for the school visited offered classes in the language of the great majority.

Even though Breidlid (2013) and Brock-Utne (2014) argue for the local language and not a colonial language as an approach to improve pupils’ academic performances, we fully understand that blacks in diaspora had to appropriate the language imposed by the ruling power because of the social context as described previously. Furthermore, we argue for a political position in favor of recognizing the current language spoken by former colonies as their own language i.e. Cuban language instead of Cuban Spanish language. From a Pan

Africanist point of view, we see the necessity of breaking any ties that may indicate the presence of colonial power. Moreover, we think that such distinction is able to prevent any confusion between the official language (Spanish) and the vernacular language (Cuban Spanish).

### **5.1b Artistic Education and the Process of 'Catación'**

In the subject Artistic education, the Cuban primary students are exposed to a number of local cultural manifestations, local knowledges, that aim to develop the students' intellectual abilities through creative activities.

During a semi-structured interview, Perondo Domingo, the former sub-director of the local Primary school, claimed that "[...] sometimes, the Cuban government promotes workshops where the students go in parallel to school to learn any of those local cultural manifestations" (Domingo, personal communication, September, 2015). In the quote, Domingo uses the term 'local cultural manifestations' as a synonym to local knowledges. He added that the teachers of artistic education teach the pupils different rhythms of the Cuban music and dance, 'Cha-cha-cha', 'Rumba', 'Conga', 'Mambo', and they also teach rhythms of other countries like 'Samba' from Brazil, 'Tango' from Argentina, 'Correa' from Mexico among others. They also teach the children the different manifestations of Fine Arts, the different painters, different sorts of musical manifestation like choir, theater, and dance.

The teachers of artistic education prepare the pupils in all of those cultural manifestations during their time in Primary School. In a specific moment, the pupils may show an interest in one of those manifestations. Likewise, the teachers or the parents notice that their pupils are good in one of those manifestations. So, there is in Cuba after and during the Primary School a sort of specific teaching for music, arts, where a fifth grade student is understood that has a special vocation then he or she goes through a vocational test in a specific school that can be dance, music, sport, arts [...]. (Perondo Domingo, personal communication, September, 2015)

According to Domingo, the former local sub-director of the Cuban Primary School, there is a national process called 'Catación' that goes in parallel with the pupils' education in the Primary Schools. Domingo stated that the family, community, and the teachers are responsible for encouraging their pupils to test their abilities in a vocational test that might guide the students to develop their talents in different types of sports, dance, painting, drawing, music among others. In line with Banks (2010, p. 234) we understand that to focus

on the pupils' abilities is an effective way of promoting a meaningful education. Besides studying hard and being exposed to the local cultural manifestations, the Cuban pupils also have the chance to develop their artistic and sporting abilities in their local language.

Domingo, the former local sub-director of the Cuban Primary School, claimed that the students have a teacher for Artistic Education. This teacher is in charge of exposing the children to the main localities in the community, i.e. museums, local celebrities of the artistic world such as painters, musicians etc. The teachers are also in charge of building up a connection between the school and social activities in the communities i.e. with 'Rumba', with drawings etc. Thus, in those projects, the pupils interact with the local personalities.

In another semi-structured interview with Maite Garcia, the chief of the cycle, we were told that most of talents found in the process of 'Catación' come from the subject Artistic Education.

[...] this current year many children of this school got qualified in the vocational tests for the Music School. Through the 'Catación' program! They will join the school and soon they will play some instruments. However, it is more difficult to have access to the School of Painting. The teaching of painting comes after the primary level. They must obligatorily pass the high school and later in the 'pre-university' is that they may join the 'School of Painting'. (Maite Garcia, personal communication, September, 2015)

According to the curricular document 'Programas: Quinto Grado' (2015, p. 102), Artistic Education provides creative activities that correspond to the students' daily routine. It is enhancing that the pupils can see the knowledge acquired applied in the daily life. The program in general contributes to the formation intellectual character abilities, fundamentally the observation, comparison, analyzes, synthesis, explanation, and argumentation.

- **Dance as a vibrant Cuban local knowledge in CPES**

Sefa Dei (2002, p. 336) understands education as the varied options, strategies, and ways through which people come to know themselves as well as the world they act within. We perceive the Cuban culture as is in itself a complex mixture of different, sometimes contradicting factors and influences. The national cultural and customs are based on African, European, and Indigenous elements. It means that the local knowledges implemented in Primary School are basically a mix of European and African influences. Indeed, they consist of a form of creolized fusion and mixtures of these two great sources as we can see in the local cultural manifestations such as 'Danzón', 'Rumba', 'Chácháchá', 'Mambo', 'Salsa', '

Baile`, among others. Interestingly, during our visit to the investigated school, we noticed that most of the local knowledges implemented were related to dance in general. Nonetheless, none of those dance expressions was actually purely Afro or Indigenous.

We may infer from our observations that the decision of visiting those school subjects that were linked to dance in general was taken, because the Cuban educational specialists wanted to show the most vibrant expressions of local knowledges in that school. Even though, Anaire Ortega, the local chief of education, affirms that local knowledges can be present in all subjects, during our visit we were not able to observe science education classes due to the little time. However, we argue that science education subjects should also be localized so that students can be prevented from the potential Western alienation. In the section 5.3d, we suggest Ethno-Mathematics as an ontological and epistemological approach for the science education subject Mathematics.

The local knowledges can be found in all the subjects, [...] but there are subjects that support more the theme. For example, History of Cuba, the World that we live, Geography of Cuba are subjects that favor more this work with local knowledges. But in all subjects you can approach, for example, a class of Spanish language, a reading that I will work and then I can link with the local history and therefore with the local knowledges. A mathematics class, the presentation, I can relate to the local history and also to local knowledges. (Anaire Ortega, personal communication, September, 2015)

In fact, during our methodological meeting in the school investigated<sup>22</sup>, no visit had been planned for classes of science education. Instead, we, the educational specialists and us focused on the local knowledges that would represent genuinely the Cuban culture. Or in line with Matthews (1970 p. 337), we would say that we visited those subject classes that have local knowledges according to what Fidel Castro and his comrades thought that would represent the new Cuban national culture. Figures 11 and 12 show classes of `Chácháchá`, and `Salsa` with students of fifth grade at the Primary School Pedro Domingo Murillo in Ciudad Libertad, in Marianao, municipality of Havana.

---

<sup>22</sup> See Appendix VII for the visit Schedule in the school investigated



Fig. 11 Chácháchá class. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)



Fig. 12 Salsa class. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)

- **Fine Arts in CPES**

During a semi-structured interview with Maite Garcia, the chief of the cycle, we were told that most of talents found in the process of ‘Catación’ come from the subject Artistic Education. According to the curricular document ‘Programas: Quinto Grado’ (2015, p. 102), the Artistic Education provides creative activities that correspond to the students’ daily routine. It is enhancing that the pupils can see the knowledge acquired applied in the daily life. The program in general contributes to the formation of intellectual abilities, such as observation, comparison, analyzes, synthesis, explanation, and argumentation.

[...] for instance, in the unit 7 “How art tells our history”, the activities of appreciation are directed to the analysis and value of distinct artistic works on the ground with artistic value. It is also informative about the historic facts important for our history and it will influence on the emotion that the study of those themes awake in the pupils establishing a strong relation with the subject History of Cuba. (Programas: Quinto Grado, 2015, p. 102)

Figures 13, 14, and 15 display two activities related to Fine Arts. Drawing and Ceramics, in semi-structured interviews with the facilitators, both stated that the production is related to national symbols and or the representation of the Cuban daily routine. In drawing classes, the



students were required to represent the rural life of Cuban citizens. In Ceramics classes, the students were required to make birds as an analogy to the Cuban 'palomita blanca', the Cuban white pigeon.



Fig. 13 Artistic Class: Drawing. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)



Fig. 14 Ceramics. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)



Fig. 15 Ceramics of local birds. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)

During the semi-structured interviews with my informants, we were told that many students were identified as potential talents in the music and artistic areas in that school. Figures 13, 14, and 15 display two different artistic activities Cuban primary students are exposed to at the Arts Institute in Ciudad Libertad. During the visit to the Ceramic class, we were told that two of those students had been granted a national prize for arts with ceramics. The high level of discipline and concentration among the pupils during the classes called our attention. Why are the primary students so involved in those activities? According to Domingo, the local former sub-director of Primary School, the students had been through a process that could indicate their artistic potentials. Thus, Cuban primary students are likely to develop those local knowledges that they have a vocation for.

In line with Banks (2010, p. 234) we argue that the Cuban students learn best and are likely to be highly motivated when are exposed to curriculum that reflects their home and community culture. Cuban students are likely to find at school the cultural capital they have at

home with their parents and in their communities through the local knowledges. Nevertheless, we argue that Cuban students should have more time to be exposed to local knowledges. According to our observation and curricular documents, we noticed that the focus of local knowledges is actually very low in comparison to subject classes such as Mathematics and Spanish Language. Interestingly, Mathematics and Spanish classes are the main focus on UNESCO's international tests.

### **5.1c Cubanized school subjects**

During a semi-structured interview with Alina Verde, school principal, the Cuban educational specialist claimed that the local knowledges do not belong to a non-Western epistemology, rather she understands that local knowledges come from the school subjects such as History of Cuba, Civic education, and Labor Education, for instance. In other words, Verde explained that the local knowledges are actually generated from the subjects of the existing schooling system in Cuba.

- **History of Cuba subject: The importance of local history**

As presented previously in the background, the Cuban schooling system is the result of a hybrid tradition of knowledges, the Marxist-Leninist philosophy and the Cuban educational ideology mainly on José Martí's thoughts. The implementation of local knowledges comes from this hybrid educational context where the schooling subjects have been nationalized with Cuban elements.

I have to say that the development of revolutionary thought was strongly influenced by the traditions of our country, by the history of our country, by the liberation struggles of our country. It can be said that the concept that inspired the revolutionary strategy that led to the triumph in 1959 was, in fact, the union, the hybridization of a tradition, of an experience peculiar to our nation with the essential ideas of Marxism and Leninism. (Castro as cited in Cruz, 2015, p. 197)

As mentioned previously, the classes were held in the local language, Cuban Spanish, and the books are produced by the Cuban Ministry of Education and represent the culture of the Cuban pupils as seen in figure 16. The representation of Antonio Maceo, one of the main heroes of the Cuban independence, as the "Bronze Titan" which was a reference to his skin color, stature, and status prevents the alienation process described by Breidlid (2013) regarding the teaching content which locates students to "[...] a space where their own



cultures and worldviews are seldom, if ever, taken into account beyond their folkloristic aspects” (p. 2).



Fig. 16 Cuban perspective on history. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)

Hence, Cuban pupils are actually likely to identify themselves with pictures and figures that represent the Cuban social context. Furthermore, it is relevant to state that the local books for the whole Cuban Educational System are produced and published by the local Ministry of Education.

The Cuban state is responsible for all educational materials. Since the revolution and then with the literacy campaign, Cuba does not receive a penny from the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund. The reassembly and the presupposition that is required for the functioning of the Cuban national education system is conditioned basically by the development of the Cuban economy, so you can see that our institutions do not reach the useful level of materials. (Afonso Cok, personal communication, September, 2015)

For Cuban educators, the local knowledges can be found outside their books and in the schools. Cok, the former sub-director of CPES, claimed that Cuban students often get out of their rooms to visit historical places in their communities and the city. During the week we observed the school Pedro Domingo Murillo, we had the chance to follow a group of fifth grade primary students who visited the monuments of Marianao such as the 'Obelisque' in the figure 17 and the 'Museo de la Alfabetización', Museum of Literacy, in the figures 18 and 19.



Fig. 17 Visit to the Obelisk. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)



Fig. 18 Visit to the Literacy Museum. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)



Fig. 19 Literacy Museum. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)

We understand the Cuban hybrid tradition on education as a unique phenomenon in the global South. Unlike its Latin American neighbors that seem to be immersed in the global architecture of education as Jones (2007, p. 325) argues, Cuba has managed to foster a type of

education that aims to rescue the local tradition in order to maintain and construct continuously their national identity.

The history of Cuba has a great political and ideological potential for the achievement of forming the communist personality which is given, mainly, through the study of the patriotic traditions of our people, the values of our most relevant personalities, the anti-imperialism born from the imperialist Yankee behavior as our great enemy, the continuation of the fight for independence until the fulfillment of a socialist society. (Programas: Quinto Grado, 2015, p. 39)

In line with the curricular document 'Programas: Quinto Grado' (2015, p. 39), Mercedes Benitez, primary teacher, during a semi-structured interview, stated that the local history is important, since the pupils have already the knowledge of the national history.

Local history is important since students already have knowledge of the history of the country. What happens is that the children live in different places, different municipalities of Havana. I think that local history has a very important role in each municipality, because in all municipalities did not occur the same events. For example, when we speak for the children of their locality, they immediately identify their municipalities, there are children who are from "Playa", the historical facts that occurred in Playa are not the same that occurred in Marianao since the aborigines. For example, here in our municipality, they know, inquire, investigate the 'centers' that was here in our town, why the monuments here, and the discoveries that have been made here in our municipality, the settlements of Aborigenes that are here in Marianao, the places where Maceo visited, places where Martí had been to [...]. (Mercedes Benitez, personal communication, September, 2015)

Thereafter, we understand that the approach used by Cuban facilitators to teach history, for instance, departs from Western knowledge since history is taught in line with local principles. For instance, during our observations and in line with the curricular document 'Programas: Quinto Grado' (2015, p. 39-40), we saw that the primary teachers use story-telling techniques so that students feel attracted by the historic episodes and their Cuban heroes. As one may know, story-telling is an approach that has its traces in old oral traditions of indigenous people around the world. In addition, it is an example of how the Cuban educational authorities managed to cubanize this specific school subject.

- **Civic Education subject and 'los círculos de interés' interest circles**

Cok, the primary methodologist, understands that the task of the school is to develop among pupils the respect for others and the pride of being Cuban. The pride of being Cuban means to know their traditions and respect their martyrs, parents, and school. We understand

Civic Education as a subject that aims to consolidate the formation of Cuban primary pupils as fully citizens aware of their rights and duties.

Asked about the role of education in a revolutionary society, Cok, the primary methodologist, asserts that

The role of education in a revolutionary society is to prepare man for life, for a society of change, for social justice, for the improvement of human conditions. The interests are social and collective, to prepare the man in these ideals and in these principles. To prepare the man to perform their active role they are going to have. (Afonso Cock, personal communication, September, 2015)

The figure 20 below displays an activity performed by the fifth year students. During a Civic Education class, students were told to perform an investigative work with their parents designed to be 'Círculos de Interés' interest circle. Hence, students and parents were told to explore and make model of Ciudad Libertad with the main landmarks of that neighborhood as well as their functionality for the Cuban citizens.



Fig. 20 Civic Education Class: Representation of the locality Marianao (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)

According to Ecured (2006) the circle of interest is

[...] a space for research, reflection on the present and to project the future of each of the interacting members. They are made up of children, adolescents or young people who attract a common theme, but each one of them is interested in the topic some specific aspect in which they expand their knowledge and investigative practice approaching the future professional or technical they want to be. It is also a space of communication, mutual aid and collaboration that develops scientific curiosity and solidarity and collectivism among its members. (Ecured, 2006)

- **Labor Education subject**

Ortega claimed that the main goal of CPES is the integral formation of students not only in math, natural sciences, history etc., but it is also expected that they develop valuable actions such as the feeling of solidarity, humanity, responsibility, and labor.

We all work together; we have only one line, to achieve the interaction, the integral formation of our students, integral formation and to be an integral man what is necessary? It needs the family, it needs the school, it needs the knowledge, the general culture, it is as unique, but also this education for labor formation [...]. (Anaïre Ortega, personal communication, September, 2015)

Among the objectives in the citation above, we argue that the idea of eliminating contradiction between school and society has become the trigger for the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System. Breidlid (2013) cites Jose Martí when the Cuban nationalist stated that “In the morning the pen, but in the afternoon the plough” (p. 152). Indeed, this idea was already in the island before the upcoming of Marxist-Leninist theories. Even though the fifth grade students are not supposed to go to the countryside to work on the earth, the pupils are meant to do a couple of activities that resemble the chores they will or might do at home when they grow older. These activities, as the curricular document ‘Programas: Quinto Grado’ (2015, p. 78) states, aim to prepare the pupils for life.

In line with Gallo (as cited in Gasperini, 1999, p. 8), the subject Labor Education has a close relation between theory and practice. In the same way as the subjects History of Cuba and Civic Education, the subject Labor Education has also been localized so that the pupils could be exposed to Cuban labor activities. During our visit to Labor Education class, we saw fifth grade students in a sewing class as in the figure 21 and helping the school staff in the kitchen as in the figure 22.



Fig. 21 Sewing class. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)



[...] in the sewing area, the students continue to develop the abilities initiated in the second grade, they work with fabrics for production of personal pieces as well as for public utility [...] The work with wood and metal area starts in the fifth grade, thus students are exposed for the first time to in the area, they acquire elementary knowledges about the preparation of the work and then they start developing abilities with the use of manual tools and other means of work which are applied to solve practical tasks and construction of utilities. (Programas: Quinto Grado, 2015, p. 78)



Fig. 22 Kitchen Chores. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)

[...] the work with cuisine also starts in the fifth grade, it aims to prepare the students for the life in the family, formal education, and health, and thus it fosters the development of healthy eating habits. The preparation of cold dishes is related to the locality the school is located. Moreover, all the products manufactured by students serve for the utility of the school, for the students themselves or the community [...]. (Programas: Quinto Grado, 2015, p. 78)

According to 'Programas: Quinto Grado' (2015, p. 78), the work is the main point. The pupils acquire the knowledge, the principles and techniques to develop practical teaching, and intellectual abilities. The students are exposed to different activities that represent their own reality in the communities. Indeed, the subjects Civic Education and Labor are examples of a sort of schooling that serve the objectives of a revolutionary society. Both subjects are expressions of the Cuban ideology on education.

### **5.1d Critique on the absence of Afro-Indigenous LKs in CPES**

In line with Lebakeng (2004, p. 2) we understand that although Cuba has managed to implement local knowledges in the Primary School, there are still traces of a colonial epistemicide in terms of knowledges of local traditions. This can be inferred due to the lack of

plurality of local knowledges related to the first inhabitants of the land, Taínos, and those who came later, the Yoruba population. We agree with Bright (2014, p. 9), when the scholar states that the Cuban government seems to perpetuate the race issue by not discussing it properly. The situation does not seem to be different in the Primary School System.

During our visit to the school investigated, it became evident that the local knowledges implemented in the school did not fully represent the Afro-Indigenous population. Rather, the local knowledges found in the school investigated represented a syncretic fusion and mixture of European and African sources such as 'Danzón', 'Rumba', 'Chácháchá', 'Mambo', 'Salsa', 'Baile' among others related to Fine Arts such as Ceramics and Drawing classes and generated from the Cubanized school subjects.

As mentioned previously, in the book *Cuban Festivals: A Century of Afro-Cuban Culture* by Bethlehem and Ortiz (2001, p. 59), the scholars claim that Cuba has a very similar cultural manifestation to what is known in Brazil as Capoeira Angola or simply Capoeira. Bethlehem et al. state that "[...] according to some researchers, *maní* also referred to a popular martial art cognate with the Afro-Brazilian *Capoeira* [...]" (p. 59). The so-called 'juego de maní' is said to mean "game of war" possibly in Lucumi language, nevertheless there is controversy about its origins. Similarly to Capoeira, 'maní' also derives from the Kongo Angola culture and it was used by slaves to disguise fighting practice as a form of dance. In this mix of game, dance, and fight, we use the instruments to make music and call the spirits of our ancestors for the ritual called 'Roda' "circle", the ritual in which we play music at the same time that players go through the game.

Overall, we understand that African and Indigenous traditions have spiritual manifestations that were not implemented as local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System due to the influence of a socialist-communist philosophy. In addition to that, we understand that with the creation of the new Cuban national culture based on Fidelism, many Afro-Indigenous local knowledges have been omitted or simply forgotten. Unfortunately, 'maní' is an Afro-Cuban cultural manifestation that seems to disappear slowly, since the local government has not taken any attitude to revitalize this local knowledge. During the fieldwork in Cuba, we could not find any expression of maní in the Primary School Pedro Domingo Murillo. Interestingly, we could not find maní not even on the streets of Havana or in the countryside. Indeed, this is an instance of what Lembakeng (2002, p. 2) defines as epistemicide:

The ensuing violent destruction, in the physical sense and in the form of epistemicide, facilitated the imposition of colonial moral values, traditions, philosophical outlooks, aesthetical preferences and economic fundamentals. Such destruction went hand in glove with encouraging and enforcing the adoption of social norms of Western civilization as if these comprised a universal/golden standard moral and intellectual code. (Lembakeng, 2002, p. 2)

Such an argument is in line with Moore (2015, p. 216) when the Cuban political scientist cites Carbonell in the forbidden book *Como surgió la cultura nacional?* translated as *How the National Culture was formed?* from 1961. Carbonell, described by Moore as a black Marxist historian, affirms that after the socialist revolution the new regime in Cuba was establishing national policies that enforced racism towards the Afro-Cuban religions. In addition to that, Moore says that Carbonell reported that all school material from the time had racist contents presented as they were historical facts. However, the fact that the History book portrays Antonio Maceo, the Bronze Titan, as a black man in the figure 16 contradicts Moore's argument.

According to Cohen et al. (2011, p. 37), we understand that participatory researchers should intervene in the fieldwork in order to bring changes. Hence, during our visit to the school investigated, we prepared a presentation of Capoeira Angola as showed in the figure 5 in the section 4.1 in the methodology chapter. Our objective with that activity is in line with the role of the researcher in participatory research. For this reason, we intended to raise awareness of the importance of implementing local knowledges that could also represent the plurality of Afro-Indigenous knowledges, although they might carry out spirituality. According to Sefa Dei (2002, p. 336), spirituality is not necessary in association with religion or any specific dogma. Indeed, Sefa Dei views spirituality as the engagement of students and educators in the pursuit of understanding the self and personhood for a collective schooling.

In relation to spirituality, Nassif (2010, p. 17) asserts that according to Martí's thoughts, education is the preparation of man to life without neglecting the spirituality and the conformation of man in his time. From this perspective, education represents for an individual the conquest of his or her autonomy, naturalness, and spirituality. According to Martí as found in Nassif (2010), "Education [...] empowers men to obtain, with openness and honesty, the indispensable means of life in their time of existence, without disdaining, therefore, the delicate, superior and spiritual aspirations that represent the best part of being human [...]" (p. 16). In our understanding, the separation of culture and spirituality is alien to traditional communities. Thus, the ontological and epistemological choice of the Cuban revolutionary



government in adopting a Marxist-Leninist philosophy made possible the epistemicide of local knowledges that were related to spirituality.

Throughout Moore's autobiography called *Pichón*<sup>23</sup>, the Cuban political scientist brings many citations from professor Carbonell who mostly agreed with Castro's political objectives. However, Moore (2015, p. 219) states that Carbonell used to stress that Castro had no knowledge about racial issues. Therefore the Cuban leader simply saw the racial situation as a mere product of the North-American influence and of the capitalistic system. Particularly, in line with Moore (2015, p. 217) we understand that racism might also have been one of the main cause of the absence of Afro-Indigenous cultural manifestations in the Cuban Primary Educational System. Moreover, we understand that the adoption of Marxist-Leninist philosophy, as mentioned previously, enforced the attitude against the Afro-Indigenous population.

It is important to state that we do not aim to discuss if there is still racism or not in Cuba. Rather we aim to problematize the implementation of local knowledges in the local Primary Educational System with a special attention to the absence of Afro-Indigenous cultural manifestations among the local knowledges implemented. Moreover, our Pan Africanist philosophical and political position places us beyond the dichotomy of right or left wing. It means that, before defending any ideology we are indeed in favor of our Afro-Indigenous brothers and sisters and obviously our children. From that, we can infer that even though the situation of Afro-Cubans seems to have changed considerably in the last years of the socialist revolution, the influence of racism still seems to linger in the society as a whole, specially, in the Cuban Educational System.

This argument agrees with Ngugi (1986) who states that “[...] Economic and political control of a people can never be complete without cultural control [...]” (p. 93). In line with Ngugi, we understand that in the Cuban case, the cultural control imposed on the Afro-Cuban population identified here is an expression of racism is actually a reminiscent of the old colonizing power. In other words, the colonizers might have gone, but some of their ideas stay and are used by the new power. Conscious of that, we agree with Freire (1970, p. 64) and therefore we defend that governments should foster a type of education that would bring ‘consiencization’ and inclusion of all knowledges within a multi-ethnic or inter-ethnic society. Hence, we understand that those in power now who have been oppressed often mistakenly

---

<sup>23</sup> According to Moore (2015, p. 28/29), *Pichón* is an offensive racist term used in Cuba to identify black people.

perceive freedom to be the act of becoming a member of the oppressing class. Instead, education should actually liberate people.

In the figure 23 below, the reader can see a presentation of Cuban Santería in the streets of Havana. Even though those local cultural manifestations are not allowed to be performed in the schools yet, it is possible to see Santería ceremonies on the streets of Havana as touristic attractions. Maybe, a new way to attract more dollars for the island that still faces an economic, financial, and commercial blockage arrogantly supported by the United States?



Fig. 23 Santería presentation. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)

In fact, in line with Matthews (1970, p. 342), we see Cuba as a very dynamic country that would do what is necessary for the maintenance of the socialist revolution. It is an extension of Fidel's personality and ambitions which we can assert as Fidelism presented in the background chapter. Thus, allowing the Afro-Cubans to express their spirituality on the streets of Havana is not only bringing profits for the socialist government. But, it is changing and therefore shaping a new national culture in the present time. From that, we can infer that a socialist society is a society fundamentally in movement. Nevertheless, we understand that the race issue in Cuba still needs to be addressed properly so that Afro-Indigenous Cuban pupils may have the chance to see their culture fully represented in school.

After describing how the local knowledges have been implemented in the Cuban Primary Educational System, we turn our attention to explore how CPES departs from what we understand as GAE.

## 5.2 How the Cuban Primary Educational System departs from GAE

In this section, we discuss how the Cuban Primary Educational System departs from the global architecture of education. Thus, we aim here to answer our third research question which is; to what extent does the global architecture of education, GAE, influence the Cuban ideology on education? Hence, we explore the tension between the Cuban ideology on education and the global architecture of education, GAE.

As presented in the theoretical chapter, Jones (2007) describes GAE as “A complex web of ideas, network of influence, policy frameworks and practices, financial arrangements and organizational structures” (p. 325). In other words, it is a sort of system where global power relations take place and therefore they use their determining influence on how education should be constructed around the world. Nevertheless, we pay a special attention to the global South, particularly to Latin America, for we understand that poor countries are much more vulnerable to this social, political, and economical phenomenon named as the global architecture of education. However, the Cuban Primary Educational System seems to depart from the rest of Latin America. Thus, it is relevant for this study to explore how that is possible.

In order to understand how the Cuban Primary Educational System departs from GAE, it is necessary to observe the daily routine of a Primary School. We first have to understand how a school day works and to what extent students are exposed to the Western and local knowledges.

After the “el matutino<sup>24</sup>”, we start the first part of our school day at 8:10 AM until 12:30 / 12:40. Thus we follow the curriculum Spanish language, Cuban History, Natural Sciences, Math, Civic Education what gives room to what you are investigating: Local knowledges through the study of the locality and the rescue of the traditions. They have Physical Education, Informatics, they work in the library, English language, Arts that we have our ‘baile de la tradición’, all Cuban dances we have worked. (Alina Verde, personal communication, September, 2015)

During our visit to the school investigated, we could confirm the words of the school principal. One aspect that called our attention was the attitude of the students toward the activities they were supposed to perform during the whole school day. Interestingly, students, principal, teachers, and school staff seemed to be part of a big family. Students seemed to be happy in that social space.

[...] and from the second to the sixth grade they do varied activities, they work in the ‘cycle of interest’, children watch movies, eat lunch, play until 2:30. At 2:30 to 4:20,

---

<sup>24</sup> ‘El matutino’ is a traditional opening ceremony to start the school day in Cuban schools.

there is a second session of work but more 'flocha' quiet. Because the hard classes are in the morning, in the afternoon they have tele-class, Arts, Music. The fifth grade for example you are work with go to the Art Center. On different days, there is a large group of children who go out to play football, judo, jiu-jitsu, they also go for dance. We have a schedule for these kinds of activities. At 4:20 P.M., we ring the bell and arrange the students' exit, the children who leave are only going ahead and the parents who come walking enter behind, but there is a group of children that the parents come to seek after that because of their jobs. So, after 5:00 P.M, we organized the space for the farewell. In the yard there are two teachers with the later students, so they have the students playing a bit more until their parents come. (Alina Verde, personal communication, September, 2015)

According to Verde, the school principal, the students have a hard session of studies with the main subjects that follow the national curriculum in the morning and in the afternoon there is a light session of studies as seen in the figure 24 where we can see the rehearsal of the school 'Baile'.



Fig. 24 Rehearsal of 'Baile'. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)

Verde, the school principal, claims that the Cuban Ministry of Education is concerned about students' capacity of learning and that is why they organize the school schedule so that students can better perform in the school subjects. She states that it is 'un problema de higiene de el horario' hygiene of the schedule.

[...] the capacity of the children by the morning is not the same as in the afternoon. In the morning students are more active and ready to work hard, so Mathematics is given in the morning, the Spanish Language, History of Cuba, Geography (in the sixth grade), this is not given in the morning. What is given in the afternoon is the course of 'El Mundo que Vivemos' 'The World We Live in' as well as Dance, Arts among and so on, but the students love these subjects, because they are very relaxing. (Alina Verde, personal communication, September, 2015)

According to the semi-structured interviews and personal observations, we can infer that the current epistemology used in Cuba is not merely a final product of the international

agenda of GAE. Indeed, we understand that the implementation of local knowledges in CPES has significantly prevented the alienation primary Cuban students would suffer if they were exposed only to a pure hegemonic Western epistemology. In other words, the Cuban revolutionary education is in fact socialist-communist, however it is evident that the Cuban educational authorities were sensitive to the potential alienation a full adoption of a Western philosophy would bring for the local students. For that, they aimed to cubanize the school subjects.

According to Gasperine (2000, p. 11) there is an initiative that engages facilitators and students in adapting the national primary curriculum and developing instructional materials locally. Gasperine states that

National curricula [...] are subject to continuous reform and adaptation to local realities. In addition, the school calendar varies according to local production schedules. These measures allow for both unified educational standards and respect for local diversity. Teachers and students take an active role in examining the learning environment and adapting the curriculum to learning needs. (Gasperine, 2000, p. 11)

During our observations, we could notice how teachers are able to choose the means to implement the localized curriculum. As mentioned previously, the investigative works through the subject 'El Mundo que Vivimos' The World We Live In and 'Circle de Interés' Interest Circles, for instance, have the potential to localize the primary curriculum, because both subjects deal with the study of the community. Thus, we could also notice in line with Gasperine (2000, p. 11) that the initiative and creativity of facilitators and students towards the study of the locality aimed to compensate for the lack of resources. Gasperine states that "When resources are scarce, teacher motivation and creativity in the use of external inputs act as major inputs and determinants of learning achievement"(p. 11).

Hence, we argue that the implementation of local knowledges is part of a bigger process of cubanization that the national primary curriculum went through after the socialist revolution. Thus the cubanization process of the national primary curriculum with a special attention to the implementation of local knowledges is the main aspect that makes CPES departs from GAE. In the section 5.1, we discuss systematically all the expressions of local knowledges we came across while we were visiting the Primary School Pedro Domingo Murillo.

Breidlid (2013, p. 2) presents at least three elements that may identify the presence of GAE in a country, the first and main element is the imposition of a Western epistemology. Consequently, the second element is the lack of recognition of non-Western epistemologies.

The third element is the alienation process which is understood as the discrepancies between the home and school culture. In regards to alienation, Breidlid highlights the language of instruction in schools and the representation of the local culture in the didactic materials.

Interestingly, the Cuban Educational System, in particular, the primary one is fitting exactly in the first and the second elements presented by Breidlid (2013, p. 2). First of all, there is a massive presence of a Western epistemology through the adoption of a social-communist ideology. Second, even though the Cuban Educational System is in essence hybrid due to the harmonization of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy and the prior Cuban ideology on education with Martí's thoughts, the local educational specialists do not recognize the presence of a non-Western epistemology. Indeed, the Cuban government implemented local knowledges in the Primary System since the socialist revolution, but they understand that those local cultural manifestations come from the existing subjects such as Civic Education, History of Cuba, Geography, Labor Education and Cuban Spanish among others. According to our observations and semi-structured interviews, we perceived that the general idea among Cuban educational specialists is that the presence of local knowledges in the Primary System is actually the result of the cubanization process of the national curriculum.

On the other hand, alienation presented by Breidlid (2013, p. 2) as the third element of GAE does not seem to fit in the Cuban context. On the contrary, the Cuban government seems to lessen continuously the discrepancies between the homes and school culture by firstly cubanizing the school subjects and secondly by implementing local knowledges in the local Primary System. Carnoy et al. (2007) state, "The math curriculum was imported from German Democratic Republic and translated into Spanish" (p. 30-31). Moreover, in the school visited, the classes are held in the local language, Cuban Spanish, and the books represent the culture of the Cuban pupils. We discuss the language of instruction and the cubanized didactic materials in the section 5.1 when we explore the implementation of local knowledges in CPES.

During our visit to the school investigated, another element of GAE called our attention. Indeed, the presence of UNESCO, as the only international agent in Cuba is at least a matter of investigation. Why would the Cuban government have UNESCO as partner in developing their educational system? Why was the Primary School Pedro Domingo Murillo a reference to UNESCO? The answers for those questions were not so easy to find out. Nevertheless, in line with Ball (2003, p. 215-216), we found out that UNESCO has been in the global South

suggesting poor capitalistic countries to adopt the culture of performativity. The question now was why Cuba, a socialist State, had also applied such an approach and therefore allowed UNESCO to test their Primary Educational System in literacy and numeracy. Ball defines the culture of performativity as a:

[...] technological and cultural approach of regulation based on judgments, comparisons, and displays of achievements among educational systems for incentive, control, attrition, and change - based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic) [...] The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of ‘quality’, or ‘moments’ of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgement. The issue of who controls the field of judgement is crucial. (Ball, 2003, p.216)

The culture of performativity as Ball (2003, p. 215-216) describes is based on the concept of “quality of education” that measures learning outcomes, specially, related to literacy and numeracy. In line with Jones (2007, p. 333), we state that UNESCO’s international tests have been marginalizing the students of poor countries due to their focus on numeracy and literacy. Was Cuba following the same pattern of the neighboring Latin American countries? Probably yes. But, why would Cuba, a State that is so protective of their educational system, allow UNESCO to test their Primary Educational System and therefore report the results? Maybe the Cuban results in literacy and numeracy tests can give us the answer. The figures 25 and 26 show how Cuban results in UNESCO’s international tests.

	Bottom Quartile	Median	Top Quartile
Argentina	230	263	295
Bolivia	199	232	275
Brazil	228	256	283
Chile	225	259	294
Colombia	207	238	271
Cuba	305	343	380
Honduras	190	216	248
Mexico	194	224	260
Paraguay	198	229	264
Dominican Republic	191	220	256
Venezuela	212	242	272

Fig. 25 Data from language test from 1998 by Laboratoria Latinoamericano de Evaluacion de la Calidad de la Educaci3n. (Gasperenine , 2000, p. 23)

As the reader can see in the figure 25, Cuban primary pupils show the best results among other Latin American students in the literacy test in 1998. In Gasperenine (2000, p. 23), UNESCO’s numeracy test from 1998 is not included. Nevertheless, the Executive



Summary: SERCE<sup>25</sup> (2008, p. 29), UNESCO's partner, reported the literacy and numeracy tests' results in 2008 and as it shows in the figure 26 below, Cuba continuous to be on the top list of literacy tests.

Country	Below I	I	II	III	IV
Argentina	6.26	22.01	39.73	23.63	8.37
Brazil	6.29	25.25	39.84	21.54	7.07
Chile	1.60	9.97	34.46	36.22	17.76
Colombia	4.94	23.61	41.78	21.16	8.52
Costa Rica	1.46	10.40	34.20	35.73	18.22
Cuba	0.56	6.48	21.09	27.61	44.27
Ecuador	14.62	37.47	34.20	11.61	2.10
El Salvador	5.34	29.05	41.05	19.15	5.40
Guatemala	14.37	43.18	32.04	8.51	1.91
Mexico	3.65	19.64	37.09	27.52	12.09
Nicaragua	6.95	37.29	43.38	10.69	1.70
Panama	11.21	37.24	35.29	12.35	3.91
Paraguay	11.47	37.85	32.27	12.92	5.49
Peru	9.24	36.18	35.79	15.13	3.65
Dominican Rep.	31.38	46.73	18.04	3.29	0.56
Uruguay	4.69	19.96	39.02	24.94	11.39
Nuevo Leon	1.70	12.71	34.82	32.40	18.38
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.71</b>	<b>25.51</b>	<b>37.74</b>	<b>21.63</b>	<b>8.41</b>

Fig. 26 Percentage of third grade students by reading performance level in each surveyed country. (Executive Summary: SERCE, 2008, p. 29).

According to Executive Summary: SERCE (2008, p. 25), Cuba is the only Latin American country that has scored higher than regional average in numeracy test. The figure 27 shows the numeracy test result in 2008.

Country	Below I	I	II	III	IV
Argentina	10.46	32.77	31.13	15.17	10.47
Brazil	10.32	36.55	26.74	14.32	12.07
Chile	5.10	27.90	33.60	19.37	14.02
Colombia	8.57	38.60	33.19	12.97	6.67
Costa Rica	2.62	24.44	37.00	22.30	13.65
Cuba	1.09	10.19	16.95	17.41	54.36
Ecuador	14.34	45.48	28.12	7.91	4.14
El Salvador	10.31	45.00	31.80	9.25	3.64
Guatemala	17.34	50.06	25.07	5.46	2.08
Mexico	5.15	28.85	30.70	19.71	15.59
Nicaragua	12.10	47.95	30.50	7.49	1.97
Panama	15.98	49.69	25.15	6.42	2.75
Paraguay	15.87	37.88	25.50	11.56	9.20
Peru	15.24	45.42	25.95	8.61	4.77
Dominican Rep.	41.28	49.27	8.49	0.84	0.13
Uruguay	5.78	25.95	30.03	19.29	18.95
Nuevo Leon	2.34	18.45	31.69	24.41	23.11
<b>Total</b>	<b>10.19</b>	<b>36.03</b>	<b>28.26</b>	<b>14.30</b>	<b>11.23</b>

Fig. 27 Average score differences between urban and rural schools, and by gender. Third grade mathematics. (Executive Summary: SERCE, 2008, p. 25).

The reports above do not only show how the Cuban Primary Educational System differentiates from other Latin American countries, but also it gives a hint of the Cuban

<sup>25</sup> The second regional comparative and explanatory study about students' achievement in Latin America and Caribbean.



success in promoting cultural capital (Western knowledge and local knowledges) among their pupils. Conversely, we agree with Bourdieu (1997, p. 48) when he critiques the educational investments of modern-states based on a human capital approach as it takes place in poor countries around the world, because he argues that schools are unable to represent the pupil's home culture.

[...] economic theories neglect to relate scholastic investment strategies to the whole set of educational strategies and to the system of reproduction strategies, they inevitably, let slip the best hidden and socially most determinant educational investment, the domestic transmission of cultural capital [...] (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 48)

We understand the culture of performativity suggested by UNESCO as an expression of human capital policies for investment in education, nevertheless the alienation found in other poor countries because of such an approach is not found in Cuba at the same extent. The reason why this alienation is not so strong among Cuban primary students is because the Cuban government has been very effective in promoting cultural capital (Western knowledge and local knowledges) and social capital since the beginning of the socialist revolution. It means that the feeling of alienation among Cuban primary students has been reduced because their parents might also have been well educated and therefore the school culture is not so different from the home culture. Under this circumstance, we expose one important aspect of the tension between the Cuban ideology on education and GAE.

From this perspective, we understand that the promotion of cultural capital by the Cuban State besides preventing the alienation process as discussed in the section 3.2c is also able to explain the Cuban academic advantage among primary students. As seen in the section 3.2c in the figure 2, in line with Carnoy et al. (2007, p. 16) we extended the term cultural capital to State-generated cultural capital. However, it is important to mention that such a promotion of cultural capital was only possible due to the amount of efforts and attitude (social capital) of the same local institutions, i.e State, community, family, and school.

Thus, even though we acknowledge that the Cuban Primary Education System has been influenced by the culture of performativity suggested by UNESCO, we argue that the Cuban educators have managed to depart from GAE, because the local government managed to cubanize their primary national curriculum and implement the local knowledges. As a result, the Cuban pupils are able to score high in international tests conducted by UNESCO and at the same time they can partially find their home and communities' culture at school. About the relationship between Cuba and UNESCO, Cok, the local primary methodologist, states that

[...] we have certain relations with UNESCO that develops certain council and exchange activities. We have different institutions throughout the country that are associated with UNESCO. However, fundamentally, from the perspective of pedagogical exchanges, there is nothing from the financial perspective. Maybe, sometimes, for some materials of the activities. But, basically, all the materials that each teaching level needs, the State is responsible for [...] (Afonso Cok, personal communication, September, 2015)



Fig. 28 UNESCO's presence in Cuba. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)

Overall, It can be inferred that the more the focus on numeracy and literacy and the influence of the culture of performativity, there will be less space for local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System.

## **Part II**

### **5.3 The process of de-alienation through the local knowledges**

In this section, we explore the promotion of local knowledges in CPES as an expression of cultural capital. As it has been mentioned previously in the theoretical framework chapter, we understand cultural capital according to Bourdieu and Passeron (1990, p. 7) as the knowledge and cultural background owned by the parents and family. In other words, for this study, cultural capital encompasses the Western and non-Western knowledges (local knowledges).

Hence, we first explore elimination of contradictions between home and school culture among Cuban primary students through the implementation of local knowledges. Second, we underline the Cuban cohesive social network among school, represented by the State, family, and community. Third, we investigate how the implementation of local knowledges helped the Cuban Primary Schools to partially establish the third space in education. Finally, we discuss the dilemma of ideology in CPES and therefore we make suggestions for the potential consolidation of the Cuban educational third space.

#### **5.3a Eliminating contradictions between home and school culture**

We discuss here the attempt of CPES to reduce the contradictions between home and school culture through the implementation of local knowledges. For that, we understand that it is necessary to bring back the main points of the discussion on the forms of capital found on the theoretical framework chapter so that the reader can fully understand our intellectual construction of the term State-generated cultural capital.

In line with Gasperini (1999, p. 8), we highlight the prevention against the alienation process among Cuban students in CPES. As mentioned previously, we perceived that such alienation can be caused by the intense exposure to a hegemonic Western epistemology that creates a gap between the school and the society.

[...] as in many other socialist countries, the Marxist-Leninist philosophy of praxis inspires the objectives of the education system of educating a new human being to take responsibility for its basic social duties, to educate individuals to produce material and goods that will serve society, eliminate contradiction between school and society, producers and consumers, intellectual work and physical work, and cities and rural areas [...]. (Gallo as cited in Gasperini, 1999, p. 8)

Breidlid (2013) cites Jose Martí when the Cuban nationalist stated that “In the morning the pen, but in the afternoon the plough” (p. 152). Indeed, this idea was already in the island before the upcoming of Marxist-Leninist theories. Even though the fifth grade students are not supposed to go to the countryside to work on the earth, the pupils are meant to do a couple of activities that resemble the chores they will or might do at home when they grow older. These activities, as the curricular document ‘Programas: Quinto Grado’ (2015, p. 78) states, aim to prepare the pupils for life.

In line with Gallo (as cited in Gasperini, 1999, p. 8) the subject Labor Education has a close relation between theory and practice. In the same way as the subjects History of Cuba and Civic Education, the subject Labor Education has also been localized so that the pupils could be exposed to Cuban labor activities. According to ‘Programas: Quinto Grado’ (2015, p. 78), the work is the main point. The pupils acquire the knowledge, the principles and techniques to develop practical teaching, and intellectual abilities. The students are exposed to different activities that represent their own reality in the communities as in the figures 21 and 22 in the section 5.1. Indeed, the subjects Civic Education and Labor are examples of a sort of schooling that serve the objectives of a revolutionary society. Both subjects are expressions of the Cuban ideology on education.

As we extensively explored in the theoretical framework chapter, the idea of preventing the alienation process among Cuban primary students is in line with Carnoy et al. (2007, p. 12) when the scholars affirm that the role of the theoretical hypothesis of cultural capital as found in Bourdieu et al. (1990, p. 7) has been gradually diminished in Cuba. Indeed, we partially agree with Carnoy et al. (2007, p. 12) because in line with Matthews (1970, p. 337) and Moore (2015, p. 216), we argue that as soon as the socialist revolution triumphed in Cuba, Fidel Castro and his comrades established their beliefs, tastes, and local knowledges according to their understanding of what is to be Cuban. In other words, we argue that even though the Cuban socialist revolution was for and with the people, the elite in power imposed their own cultural capital.

From that, we state that the new Cuban national culture was actually based on Fidelism and therefore nationalism. Thus, we rather defend that there are still traces of the theoretical hypothesis of cultural capital due to the adoption of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy by the ruling group in Cuba. Furthermore, this argument is reinforced when Bright (2014, p. 9) claims that the upcoming of a new power in Cuba with the socialist revolution did not manage to discuss the race issue properly. From the exposed, we may infer that the absence of the

plurality of Afro-Indigenous knowledges in CPES is reminiscent of a lack of comprehension of racial issues by the Cuban socialist government.

As discussed in the theoretical framework chapter, Carnoy et al. (2007) define cultural capital as “[...] the knowledge, behavior, and tastes that the families brought to the educational table” (p. 7). We therefore extend the definition of cultural capital given by Bourdieu (1997, p. 48) and Carnoy et al. into the knowledges inherited by the students from the parents, community, and the State. The extension of cultural capital from family to community, and State implies that the Cuban socialist regime has evident paternalistic characteristics. For this reason, we agree with Carnoy et al. (p. 12) when they extend the notion of social capital to state-generated social capital based on the understanding of revolutionary principles. From this perspective and in line with Carnoy et al., we also extend the term cultural capital to State-generated cultural capital as described in the figure 2 in the section 3.2c. However, we do not agree that only the amount of effort or attitudes that the parents and a State put into the children’s schooling is enough to explain the Cuban academic advantage. Instead, we understand that social capital is actually aligned with cultural capital (all the knowledges produced in a social space) in order to provide a meaningful schooling system.

In conclusion, during our fieldwork in Cuba, we found out that the promotion of cultural capital with the Western knowledge along with the local knowledges is the reason for the Cuba’s academic advantage. Moreover, it became evident that such an achievement has been reached due to a set of correlational forms of capital that enable the Cuban pupils’ to achieve high grades in international tests carried by UNESCO and at the same time lessen the contradiction between school and home culture. The question now is to what extent those local knowledges implemented can fairly represent the Cuban pupils’ home and community culture, since the Afro-indigenous traditions are highly spiritual and the local education has a socialist-communist rationale.

From what we have discussed so far, we understand that even though Cuba developed their schooling system based on the beliefs, values, and principles of the local hegemonic elite group commanded by Fidel, the cohesion of the schooling system was effective in consolidating the new Cuban national culture based on a socialist-communist discourse. This means that, the feeling of alienation among Afro-Cubans created with the new Cuban culture

based on Fidelism in the beginning of the revolution has been gradually diminished throughout the years.

### 5.3b The social cohesion between State (school), family, and community

Another important element for the process of de-alienation in the Cuban Primary Educational System is the understanding that school represented by the State, family, and community should work together for the benefit of the Cuban pupils in a practical and effective social network.

[...] it is established by the Ministry of Education that the community must have influence in the school, the most important cultural manifestations that the community has. They have to interact, there are projects, as I told you, with the Rumba, dance. At the same time, the artists of the community have a lot of interest to connect with the schools. So, the teachers of artistic education expose the pupils to all of those cultural manifestations, then they connect their students with the personalities in the community. The personalities have the attitude to do their work connecting the community to school voluntarily [...]. (Perondo Domingo, personal communication, September, 2015)

In the figure 29, it is possible to see the tight relationship between the Cuban State, represented by the school, family, and community. Indeed, they are organized in order to provide the Cuban pupils cultural capital. We highlight the role of the Cuban school that is responsible for continuing and permanently complementing the given education by the family to the kids. Likewise, the family and community are organized in a social network to give the necessary support for the school.

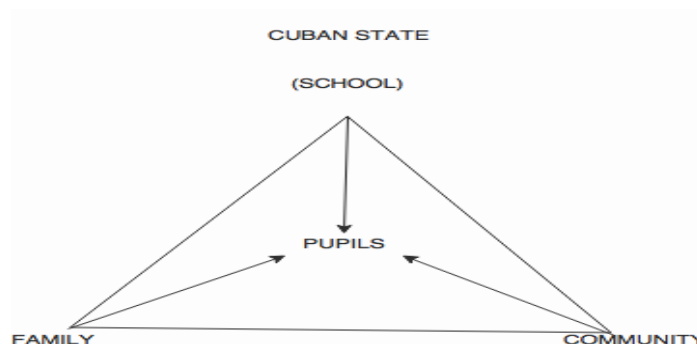


Fig. 29 The cohesive relationship between State (school), family, and, community (Thiago Nascimento)

Breidlid (2013) asserts that “[...] the epistemological transfer, besides its ramifications nationally and internationally, impacts school quality as it contributes to alienating students in the South cognitively from their home environment by introducing them to an alien culture and epistemology in school” (p. 54-55). We argue, however, that Cuba managed to harmonize the transfer of a Western epistemology to its ideology on education which generated a sort of third space as presented in the theoretical framework, a space where contradictions between the home and school culture are continuously lessened.

Alina Verde, the school principal, explained in more detail the national policy for social cohesion.

[...] State, community, family, and school, it is a State policy. For instance, I am the principal of this school, thus I represent the State, it is a State policy that the families get educated and look for the schools, and likewise we expect that the school can contribute with the continuous education of the community. It goes both ways. The schools do not do whatever they feel like it, they follow State policies. The State has the school rules that the family has to look for the schools and at the same time the schools have to become the most important center of the community so that they can also educate the family of the students. (Alina Verde, personal communication, September, 2015)

Verde’s statement is sharply in line with Ecured (2006), as the school principal describes how the social cohesion between school (State), community, and family.

The school is responsible to convey to the child the whole system of general knowledge accumulated by society, for each grade level and to continue getting the necessary knowledge and function in social life skills. Currently, with the screening of broad social policies of community development, it is actively incorporate educational centers to communities, as they can be effective disseminators in the rescue programs of communal life. (Ecured, 2006)

During our visit to the school investigated, we could confirm the principal’s statement by observing how the parents and members of the community, in particular, the CDRs<sup>26</sup> were connected to the school. The parents often came to school to meet teachers in a specific hour not only to talk about their children, but also to ask questions about different issues of their own interests. Parents also came in order to address problems in the school. Thus, we understood the relationship between school (State), community, and families as a sort of symbiosis. All for the best of the Cuban children.

Gasparini (2000) states that teachers “[...] interact regularly with the community members and parents through mass organizations and other participatory modalities such as

---

<sup>26</sup> For Definition of CDR See <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/cuba/cdr.htm>

parents' council and parents' schools" (p. 10). Gasperini adds that such interactions allow the teachers to learn about local communities, likewise the lives of the children and their families. The scholar affirms that the connection between school, family, and community enables the actors to create a broad collaborative environment for education. In addition to that, the scholar asserts that teachers act as community activists who are involved in activities such as continuous education of parents and other activities that have positive impact on the Cuban pupils' education. From our perspective, we confirm most of the information provided by Gasperini, i.e. the fact that parents have access to local schools and teachers as a means of having continuous education and it is evident that education is a shared responsibility in the Cuban revolutionary society. Nevertheless, we can not affirm that all the teachers are actually community activists.

In line with Alina Verde, the school principal, and Gasperine (2000, p. 10), Roberto Bueno, 'Presidente del Consejo de la Escuela', the president of the local parents' council, claimed that the relation between the school, family, and community goes both ways. First, Bueno states that the parents support the students in every activity the school requires.

[...] The school helps the parents and the parents help the school. We understand that the parents cooperate with the school in whatever they need. We want our school to be beautiful, because it is the house of our children too. In fact, they stay much more time in school than at home. So we have to prioritize the school so that it gets to work properly and our children happy. If the school needs painting, we gather together on the weekends and come to school to paint the classrooms and the teachers come too. (Roberto Bueno, personal communication, September, 2015)

Further, Bueno affirms that if parents are not doing their obligations properly with their children, the representative of the parents' council comes to their homes to have a conversation. In some specific cases, they have to report those parents to the local authorities. The 'Consejo de la Escuela', the school's council, is in charge of establishing an efficient channel of communication between the school and the families.

We are in charge of going to the pupil's home in order to talk with the parents about the issue. So, we go there one, two, and three times to call attention of the parents of the better of the pupil. The first priority in Cuba is the pupils and their education. And if they continue to omit the problem, we have to take the parents to the local authorities." (Roberto Bueno, personal communication, September, 2015)

Bueno claimed that the students are organized in 'Guardas Pionerees', pioneer guards, working along with the CDRs. According to Bueno, this is an extension of the school into the



communities. Likewise, the schools are always open for the community, because it is considered the cultural center of the community.

Arguably, we assert that the process of alienation that is seen in countries of the global South is not seen to the same extent in Cuba, because as Carnoy et al. (2007) state that “Cuban parents have higher levels of schooling than parents in the rest of Latin America” (p. 49). Secondly, Carnoy et al. assert that “Cuba’s children today benefit from two generations of sustained government investment” (p. 49). Analyzing the two statements by Carnoy et al. above, the former indicates a solid background among Cuban parents that can be understood, in fact, as cultural capital according to Bourdieu (1997, p. 48). The latter represents a clear example of what we described as State-generated cultural capital, for the Cuban government invested in a set of correlational forms of capital that aim to bring educational benefits for the Cuban students.

[...] I spent my Primary and Secondary School here in Ciudad Libertad, in Marianao, in the fifth grade I had also Mercedes as a teacher, she is now teacher of my daughter, then I went to Cuba Ethiopia School to take precollege education, then I graduated as administrator of gastronomy [...]. (Roberto Bueno, personal communication, September, 2015)

During a semi-structured interview with the president of the parents’ council, Roberto Bueno, he explained how the Cuban government has been committed to education since the Revolution. Roberto Bueno states that he was well treated and educated during his time in the Cuban schooling. From this perspective, we can infer that the Cuban Ministry of Education has been working hard since 1959 in order to provide a type of education that would represent the values and belief of the socialist revolution. In Cuba, it became evident for us that, school (directly represented by the State), community, and family are aligned to work together for the Cuban pupils.

Even though we agree with Bourdieu (1997, p. 48) about the importance of promoting cultural capital as a means to prevent alienation, we also understand that the accumulation of cultural capital (Western and local knowledges) does not indicate directly social mobility in any society. There are racial issues that need to be addressed in capitalistic or in socialistic societies i.e. institutionalized racism that may impede a skilled Afro or Indigenous worker to get a high position in the job market. In order to avoid that, we understand that the local governments need to create affirmative actions to reduce the racial issues. Moore (2007, p. 26) affirms that the Cuban government started to implement affirmative actions in Cuba since 1985. Those affirmative actions aimed to reduce racial tensions in the country. Nevertheless,

as a Pan Africanist we are fully aware that the fight against racism is indeed bigger and comes before the fight against Imperialism.

**5.3c The third space in the Cuban Primary Educational System**

We use the third generation cultural-historical activity theory or simply, CHAT as found in Bhabha (1994, p. 269) and Engeström (2015, p. 63) in order to allow us to have a more appropriate analyses of the knowledge-making relations and practices between potentially epistemologically divergent ways such as the Western epistemology and the local knowledges implemented in the Primary Educational System in Cuba. Moreover, Breidlid (2013, p. 48) suggests the use of CHAT as a way to operationalize and comprehend the third space.

As mentioned previously in the theoretical chapter, in line with Miranda (as cited in Cruz, 2015, p. 196), we understand that the Cuban hybrid tradition on education has been able to generate a third space, since the Cuban educational authorities managed to harmonize the Marxist-Leninist theory with the most local elements of the Cuban tradition on education, and generate new knowledge. Nevertheless, we understand that the third space generated from the hybrid Cuban tradition on education is not fully fulfilled due to the absence of the plurality of Afro-Indigenous local knowledges.

Analyzing one of the main elements of the Cuban Primary Educational System, the subject Music Education, for instance, it is possible to realize to what extent the Afro and Indigenous traditions have been left out in the primary curriculum. The curricular document 'Programa: Quinto Grado' (2015, p. 125) displays the objectives of the subject Music Education in the figure 30 below.

Songs for 'Bailes' of my homeland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify different genres of the Cuban music and their dancing manifestations by emphasizing the feeling of nationalism and Cuban cultural identity.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To appreciate Cuban concert music, enjoying the representative works with adequate standard behavior.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To sing: with a correct position, diction, metrics and intonation the works: De Cuba para la Habana, Guajira Plin, Plin, Plin, Marcha Siempre Venceremos.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To listen in silence, with attention and performing the tasks assigned: Zapateo Tradicional, Tonada la Tulibamba, Danzón Tres lindas cubanas of Antonio Ma. Romeu, Berceuce campesina of A. Grarcía Caturla, Guaguancó de Guido López Gavilán.</li> </ul>
Songs for 'Bailes' of Latin America
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify different genres of the Latin American music and some of their dancing manifestations by emphasizing the feeling of Latin American unity.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To appreciate Latin American concert music, enjoying the representative works with adequate standard behavior.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To sing representative songs from Latin America with correct diction, metrics, and intonation.</li> </ul>

Fig. 30 Objectives of the subject Music Education (Programa: Quinto Grado, 2015, p.125)

The data displayed in the figure 30 is in line with Breidlid (2013, p. 141) when the scholar states that there is no trace of religious practices in the Cuban Primary Education System due to its socialist-communist approach in education. Moreover, according to Moore (2007, p. 26), we infer that racism might have influenced the Cuban educational specialists in choosing which local knowledges should be implemented or not in the Cuban Primary Educational System. Bhabha (1994, p. 66) states that we are still living with the consequences of colonialism and its effects can be felt in and recreated in different manners. From this perspective, we can not actually affirm that the reasons for the absence of the Afro-Indigenous knowledges in CPES is racism. But, in a practical way, we understand that it is a must for the Cuban Ministry of Education to address the plurality of Afro-Indigenous local knowledges if they really aim to consolidate a full status third space in CPES.

As seen in the theoretical work chapter in the section 3.3 the figure 3, the third space is generated by the interrelation between object 1 and object 2 that creates an object 3. In the Cuban case, the object one is the Western epistemology, the object two is the Cuban ideology on education, and the object three the Cuban hybrid schooling system with localized school subjects. Therefore, the local knowledges were implemented as a supplement to the existing epistemology in order to establish a third space. As a result, the third space generated is likely to prevent the alienation process Cuban primary pupils might have due to the exposure of Western knowledges.

During our visit to the school investigated, it became evident the asymmetry issue that Breidlid (2013, p. 47) addresses when analyzing the dialectic between Western and non-Western knowledges. The curricular document 'Programas: Quinto Grado' (2015, p. 26)

displays the amount of hours Cuban pupils are exposed to each school subject. Interestingly, the curricular document shows that the pupils are exposed to 200 hours of Math in a whole school year and five hours per week. In comparison to other subjects, only the subject Spanish Language, with 240 hours in a school year and six hours per week can beat the quantity of exposition to mathematics. Other subjects such as History of Cuba, Civic Education, and Labor Education have 80 hours in school year and two hours per week, Music Education and Artistic Education have 40 hours in school year and one hour per week, and Natural Science has 120 hours in a school year and three hours a week.

This means that, although CPES is able to implement local knowledges, it is at the same time highly influenced by subjects with a Western epistemological bias. From the data displayed above, we can infer that there is a bigger focus on the school subjects that are often tested by UNESCO. The subjects Spanish Language and Math have the highest amount of hours among the school subjects. As a result, little time is given to expose the primary pupils to local knowledges. Nevertheless, the minimum of exposition Cuban pupils have to local knowledges it is able to diminish significantly the alien feeling they would have at school. Thus, in line with Breidlid (2013, p. 49), Bhabha (1994, p. 66) argues for a re-signification of power relations in the knowledge production. Bhabha understands that if we can re-signify or signify differently the power relation in the knowledge production, we can be able to subvert or transform the oppressive patterns of the hegemonic knowledge. In other words, if the Cuban Ministry of Education wants to establish a full third space in CPES, it is time to rethink the implementation of local knowledges.

In conclusion, we agree with Breidlid (2013) when he argues that “[...] a third space is a sort of space which generates new possibilities by questioning entrenched categorizations of knowledge systems and cultures and opens up new avenues with a counter-hegemonic strategy” (p. 47). From that, we argue that Cuba still needs to recognize the presence of local knowledges in their Primary Educational System as an element of a non-Western epistemology, rather than defending that local knowledges come or are generated from the Cubanized school subjects or in a broader sense from a hybrid local educational system.

### **5.3d Ethnomathematics as an expression of LKs**

In this section, we explore an ontological and therefore epistemological suggestion in the field of Science Education that aims to foster the third space in the Cuban Primary

Educational System. Our attempt to suggest an educational approach for science education subjects such as Mathematics in a more holistic way has to do with our participatory role in the research.

Even though the Cuban educational specialists affirm that all subjects in the Cuban Primary Educational System have been cubanized and that local knowledges can be found in all school subjects, the curricular document 'Programas: Quinto Grado' (2015) does not show any sign of the those elements. Since we have not visited any science education class due to our little time in the fieldwork, it is difficult to affirm whether at least the approach taken by the teacher in class has any trace of cubanization or local knowledges. Likewise, we can not say anything about the didactic materials of those school subjects. But, according to our document analysis, we perceived a great exposition to the school subject Math which is always tested by UNESCO international tests. Likewise, during our visit to the school investigated, we perceived a big pressure for the Cuban pupils to perform well in literacy and numeracy in international tests conducted by UNESCO.

In line with Ernest (as cited in Breidlid, 2013) "The role of mathematics is inseparable from the dominant background ideology of capitalism-consumerism, through which it helps to sustain the economic supremacy of the developed countries of the North" (p. 58). The presence of a massive syllabus in mathematics in the Cuban Primary Educational System, for instance, in the curricular document 'Programas: Quinto Grado' (2015, p. 26), implies that the Cuban Primary Educational System has been considerably immersed in the culture of performativity suggested by UNESCO and therefore partially influenced by GAE.

[...] with this course, the initial preparation of the students with the natural number is completed, then it is time to start the students' development in new areas of mathematics as they are, the numerical fractions and all movements that are of great importance in the students' preparation for a medium level in their general lives. This course is organized in four broad themes: Natural Numbers, Numerical Fractions (calculation with fractions), Magnitudes, Geometry [...] (Programas: Quinto Grado, 2015, p. 26)

Conscious of the alienation such a massive math curriculum may bring for Cuban primary pupils and in line with the third stage of 'ideology critique' as found in Habermas (as cited in Cohen et al. 2011, p. 34), we suggest that Cuban educational specialists should rather go for Ethno-mathematics as an expression of local knowledges in order to foster what we previously described as third space in CPES. Rosa and Orey (2011) state that "An ethno-mathematical perspective in the mathematics curriculum advocates the introduction of

culturally relevant teaching methods that challenge what is called the Eurocentrism of mathematics education” (p. 48).

Rosa and Orey (2011) state that to teach math through cultural and historical relevance as well as personal experience helps the pupils to understand better the reality, different cultures, societies, environmental issues, and themselves. Hence, we wonder if the Cuban math system imported from the German Democratic Republic as Carnoy et al. (2007, p. 30-31) affirm could represent even more the pupils’ culture. Since it is known that math is present as a universal element of local knowledges in different cultures, could the Cuban educational specialists rescue the Yorubá and Tainos’s math systems? We understand that before implementing such knowledges, it is a must to recognize its necessity and then go for a sensitive research of the local traditions. The question now is; once Cuba is immersed in the culture of performativity suggested by UNESCO with reasonable international reports, would they rather go for Afro-Indigenous knowledges in math?

### **5.3e The dilemma of ideology and the local knowledges in CPES**

In this section, we explore the ideology carried by the Cuban schooling system and how it affects the implementation of local knowledges in CPES. As it has been exhaustively stated here, the Cuban schooling is known for transmitting a socialist-communist discourse among their students. Thus, we intended to discuss the ideological approach behind the Cuban Primary Educational System in line with the concepts of ideology found in Habermas ( as cited in Cohen et al. 2011).

Notably, Habermas (as cited in Cohen et al. 2011) defines ideology as “[...] the values and practices emanating from particular dominant groups – is the means by which powerful groups promote their particular – sectorial – interests at the expense of disempowered groups” (p. 33). Likewise, we also use the concept of ‘ideology critique’ as a method to explore the social-communist ideology in the Cuban schooling system, in particular, the Cuban Primary Education System. According to Habermas (as cited in Cohen et al. 2011) “Ideology critique exposes the operation of ideology in many spheres of education, the working out of vested interests under the mantle of the general good” (p. 33).

Thus, Habermas (as cited in Cohen et al. 2011, p. 34) suggests that ideology critique through reflective practice should be addressed in four stages:

- Stage 1: a description and interpretation of the existing situation. Habermas defends a hermeneutic exercise that identifies and attempts to make sense of the current situation.
- Stage 2: a presentation of the reasons that brought the existing situation to the form as it takes. Habermas here states about the causes and purposes of a situation and an evaluation of their legitimacy, involving an analysis of interests and ideologies in a situation.
- Stage 3: an agenda for altering the situation. For Habermas this is a move to a more egalitarian society to be furthered.
- Stage 4: an evaluation of the achievement of the situation in practice.

(Habermas as cited in Cohen et al. 2011, p. 34)

During a semi-structured interview, Cok, the Cuban primary methodologist, claimed that “The education constitutes an element to show the superiority of our system, the socialist system” (Afonso Cok, personal communication, September, 2015). Cok’s statement can express the engagement the Cuban Ministry of Education demands from all the educational agents involved in the process. We noticed that this way of thinking was among Cuban educational professionals. Even those informants who had left their educational carriers to work in different areas had the same opinion about the greatness of the Cuban Primary Educational System. Perondo Domingo, the former sub-director of Primary School, for instance, stated that

[...] even when those Cubans who left the country because they did not agree with the local political system or something else they did not like it... they noticed afterwards how great is the Cuban educational system, in particular, our Primary School. How we take care of our children etc. (Perondo Domingo, personal communication, September, 2015)

Breidlid (2013, p. 154) states that Che Guevara’s ideological anti-Western, anti-capitalist view as well as his idea of indoctrination in education as an agent of change is reminiscent of Freire’s ideas of indoctrination, whereas both thinkers depart from different epistemological solutions to foster another indoctrination. Thus, while Freire is concerned in challenging the hegemonic knowledge production legitimized by colonial pedagogical practices through conversations and dialogues, Guevara suggests an ideological closure where the answers are given and no real dialogue is needed or permitted.

Cuban pedagogical traditions and international conceptions from Vygotsky, a more child-centered teaching approach so that they can commit themselves to their own learning process. A more meaningful education. The teacher is not just a transmitter of knowledge, but a guide for the students to evolve, because if there is no meaning for them, they do not learn. Active role, developer and protagonist. The construction of its own learning from the methodological and psychological foundation and the philosophical foundation that is the materialist dialectic, Marxist and Fidelist. (Afonso Cok, personal communication, September 2015)

Even though Cok affirms that the role of the teacher is not as the 'transmitter of knowledges', the Cuban schooling system seems to convey a socialist-communist schooling based on the banking model education criticized by Freire (1970, p. 47). Freire explains the banking model of education by describing that students are treated as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge. In contrast to that, the Brazilian scholar argues for a sort of pedagogy that would treat the learners as a co-creator of knowledge or knowledges (local knowledges). Freire defends that the critical thinking should be solidly developed in dialogue between facilitators and students from the beginning to the end of a schooling process.

The Cuban schooling program is a matter of great discussion among educational scholars around the world, while some of them argue in favor, others have strong arguments against it. Those scholars who criticize the Cuban schooling argue that the local curriculum is highly biased in favor of a socialist-communist ideology, and therefore pupils have no opportunity to see issues from different perspectives. Banks (2010, p. 245) states that the main goal of schooling has been to socialize students so that they would accept unquestionably the existing ideologies, institutions, and practices within society and the nation-state. In line with Banks, Cruz (2015, p. 197) states that the Cuban government had adopted a dogmatic position that was not supportive of debate within the social sciences in general. Such an approach can be also seen in the curricular document 'Programas: Quinto Grado' as it follows:

From those elements, the process of schooling can inculcate in their pupils the love for the homeland, the proud of being Cuban, the respect for the heroes, the desire to be like their heroes, the hate for imperialism, and other feelings of great connotation in the political and ideological formation of the new generations. (Programas: Quinto Grado, 2015, p. 39)

In contradiction to that, during a semi-structured interview the fifth grade teacher, Mercedes Benitez claimed that in the Cuban Primary Education System, the pupils are challenged to perform investigative tasks in order to develop their critical view on different issues.



The practical work of investigation can do in several ways, they can do research for the meaning of the historical fact, making drawings, exposing, discussing and the parents are forced to take their children to the museum for an investigation, they listen to the elders who have knowledge about how things were before and at the same time the elders can talk about those facts, because they have gone through all them. We have this advantage that the parents also go out, investigate with their children, and learn too. For example, here at school when we ask for practical work on aborigines, they come out identifying a stage of history, the primitive community [...] (Mercedes Benitez, personal communication, September 2015)

During our observations at the Primary School Pedro Domingo Murillo, we had the chance to see how those investigative activities are performed through the activity Cuban educational specialists call 'Los Círculos de Interés' Interest Circles. The figure 31 below shows a presentation of investigation work conducted during the interest circles. In this presentation, we did not have the presence of the students' parents in class, but the fifth grade teacher, Reina Nunes, claimed that the parents were involved in the investigation process.



Fig. 31 'Círculo de Interés' about the locality. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)

According to Nunes, a fifth grade teacher, primary students are required to work with their parents in order to investigate important events and personalities from their own communities. Nunes stated that when the school organizes a work with the locality, there is always a meeting with the parents.

Through an investigative study we put the parents to investigate together with the children historical and touristic places of the municipalities. We divide the pupils into teams, then each team investigates one thing. For example, one team researches why the syringe of Manuelito Aguiar is here next door? What are the martyrs here of Marianao? What is the meaning of the Obelisk, touristic places like Tropicana? We involve the parents so that they participate, investigate, and they provide information that does not appear in a school books [...] When we organize a work with the locality

we organize a meeting with the parents. We give several ideas [...]. (Reina Nunes, personal communication, September, 2015)

Although we could see the investigative task during our visit to the Primary School Pedro Domingo Murillo, we still wonder to what extent those investigative tasks are really developing the pupils' critical view on the world. Indeed, we understand that Cuba has been effective in promoting capital cultural for their citizens, nevertheless there is still the polemic issue about freedom and democracy in the Island. In general, according to UNESCO's tests, Cuban students have been continuously scoring very high in literacy and numeracy. However, such abilities might not be effectively and functionally used for them as citizens, since they may be arrested if they criticize the Cuban socialist government in public.

## 6.0 Conclusion

As this study has shown, the Cuban Primary Educational System has been successful in providing cultural capital to the Cuban youth. Hence, it is relevant to underline the implementation of local knowledges as a supplement to the existing epistemology in Cuba. This study has revealed to us the importance of exposing students to their local cultural manifestations in the schools. In the Cuban case, we understand that the de-alienation process was enabled because of the implementation of local elements. Consequently, the implementation of local knowledges generated a sort of third space that we understand that still needs to be consolidated with the recognition of the local knowledges as belonging to a non-Western ontology and therefore epistemology. Furthermore, we suggested a more holistic approach toward the science education subjects which are the focus of the culture of performativity suggested by UNESCO.

Hence, we understand that there is still space for improvement regarding the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System. For that, in line with Breidlid (2013, p. 48), we argued for CHAT theory as a way to operationalize and comprehend what we described in this study as the Cuban third space. Thus, we perceived that the Cuban third space is not fully consolidated yet, because of the absence of the plurality of Afro-Indigenous local cultural manifestations (local knowledges) and the lack of acknowledgment of a non-Western epistemology.

About the latter, in line with Smith (1999, p. 69), we argue that once the Cuban educational authorities decide to recognize the local cultural manifestations in CPES as belonging to a non-Western epistemology, it is necessary then to develop the methods and approaches of such epistemology. As the reader may know, all the methods and approaches of the hegemonic Western knowledges are fully developed. Then, it is a must to establish the pedagogical orientations of a non-Western ontology and therefore epistemology so that the status of such local knowledges can be raised considerably at the same extent of importance of any other Western knowledge.

Furthermore, we understand that the attempt of establishing the methods and approaches of a non-Western epistemology may diminish the asymmetry found in the encounter of Western and non-Western knowledges in CHAT as Breidlid (2013, p. 47) states. While we were visiting the Primary School Pedro doming Murillo, it became quite clear the asymmetry between Western and local knowledges. From that, we perceived that such asymmetry comes from the understanding of Cuban educational authorities of what local knowledges are. As

stated previously, the understanding that local knowledges are generated or come from the existing subjects in CPES might have lessened their importance when they were implemented.

As a result, the time allotted for exposure of pupils to local knowledges are much less than the time allotted for exposure to Western knowledges.



Fig. 32 Students arriving at the Art Institute in Ciudad Libertad – Marianao- Havana. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)

In the figure 32, we can see fifth grade students getting to the Art Institute of Ciudad Libertad in Marianao. According to our observations, Cuban primary students have access to the Art Center only once a week in the afternoon. This means that those students have very little time exposed to local knowledges related to Artistic Education as shown in the figure 7 section 5.1, i.e. creolized dances such as 'Danzón', 'Rumba', 'Chácháchá', 'Salsa', 'Baile' and Cuban Fine Arts such as Drawing Class and Ceramics.

Likewise, Cuban students have also little time exposed to local knowledges directly related to the language of instruction such as Cuban and Latin American Music, Cuban Literal Production, and Cuban Theater. During the other school days, the only access Cuban students have to local knowledges is related to the cubanized subjects such as History of Cuba, Civic Education, and Labor Education.

Overall, as stated previously in the section 5.3e, this study agrees with Freire (1970, p. 47) when the Brazilian philosopher states that education should be more inclusive and meaningful for students. Therefore, we argue for a more open educational system that fosters critical dialogues between facilitators and students as well as with a consistent understanding of the importance of implementing the local knowledges as a non-Western epistemology, specially, in Primary Schools.

## **7.0 Afterword**

In this afterword, we reaffirm the importance of recognizing and therefore implementing the plurality of Afro-Indigenous local knowledges in CPES. For that, we underline our participatory role in introducing Capoeira Angola as a local knowledge that is recognized as belonging to an Afro-Brazilian epistemology. Likewise, we present the next steps we shall have on the theme investigated, the implementation of local knowledges in Primary Schools of Brazil, Cuba, and Norway. Hence, we assert how the field of comparative studies can potentially help researchers to comprehend the alienation process GAE may cause to different countries in different political, social, and economical situations.

### **7.1 Is Cuba also Afro-Indigenous?**

As an Afro-Indigenous from Brazil, we see the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System as a great step toward a meaningful education. It is evident that there are still challenges to deal with and overcome, for instance, the inclusion of more elements from Afro-Indigenous traditions. In the section 4.1, we cited Cohen et al. (2011, p. 37) in order to state the role of a participatory researcher that should intervene in the fieldwork in order to bring changes for the community investigated. Hence, we made a presentation of Capoeira Angola so that we could raise awareness about the importance of implementing local knowledges that could also represent the plurality of Afro-Indigenous knowledges, in particular, our spirituality that cannot be detached from our beings.

Capoeira Angola with its already established methods and approaches is understood among its practitioners as belonging to an Afro-Brazilian epistemology. Nevertheless, we still fight for acknowledgment, acceptance, and space inside the Western Academy. Recently, old 'mestres' masters such as Joao Pequeno e Joao Grande have been granted the title of 'doctor honoris causa' which is a honorary degree for those citizens with great contributions to a specific field or to society in general.

Even though, it is not Cuban, the Brazilian "game of war" is already spread on the streets of Havana as seen in the figure 33 below.



Fig. 33 Ritual of Capoeira Angola at Antonio Maceo square in Havana. (Phot. Thiago Nascimento)

In fact as we mentioned in the analysis chapter, the Cuban popular martial art cognate with Capoeira Angola, 'juego de maní' game of maní, has been through the process of epistemicide and simply disappeared from the country. Interestingly, we have been told that it might be possible to see this local knowledge, 'jogo de maní', around the region of Oriente, in the city of Santiago de Cuba, but we did not have the time to cross the island and check it out. Indeed, our attempt in showing Capoeira Angola as a full status local knowledge is in line with Smith (1999) who argues that we still need to develop the methods and approaches of such knowledges. Likewise, we thought and performed the presentation with Capoeira Angola in order to encourage the Cuban educational professionals to rescue and revitalize what they call 'juego de maní'.

As discussed in the section 5.1 in the analysis chapter, we found out that the Cuban government started to allow the Afro-Cubans to express their culture and spirituality on the streets of Havana. Interestingly, this attitude started when Fidel was still alive, after his death and legacy, we hope that Raul Castro and those in power continue or even improve such approach toward the Afro and indigenous Cubans. For us, this attitude from the local government may indicate a significant step in favor of the Afro-Cuban culture, but nothing has been done toward the indigenous population that has been either killed or assimilated by the main stream culture. Maybe, in the long run, Afro-Cuban pupils will be able to see their culture from home and community also represented in the school and not only those creolized fusion of cultural manifestations such as 'Salsa', 'Chácháchá', 'Baile', 'Danzón', 'Rumba' among others.

## 7.2 Local Knowledges and the Comparative Studies

Throughout this study, we explored the implementation of local knowledges in the Cuban Primary Educational System, nevertheless we are keen to expand this investigation to two more modern States; Brazil and Norway. About the former, we understand that Brazil represents the majority of poor countries from the global South that seems to be completely immersed in the global architecture of education. Thus, we aim to explore to what extent Brazilian primary students may suffer from the process of alienation caused by GAE. Moreover, it is enhancing to explore how the “systemic violence”<sup>27</sup> influences the local Primary Educational System.

About the latter, even though we understand that Norway is a social democracy with a welfare system, we understand that Norwegian primary students are not safe from GAE. Hence, we intend to investigate to what extent Norwegian primary students and especially the kids of the new comers refugees can feel the alienation process. Indeed, our attempt to investigate a hegemonic country is in line with our interest in balancing or inverting the roles in the production of knowledges (Western and local knowledges). We understand that it is time for researchers from poor countries of the global South to research rich countries and compare our differences and similarities for our own benefit. In line with Fanon (1963) and Smith (1999), we see this attitude as a step forward in our continuous attempt to decolonize the knowledge production.

The fact that the Cuban pupils are on the top list of numeracy and literacy tests performed by UNESCO in Latin America, deserves our attention. Particularly, we see the Cuban Primary Educational System as a reference among poor countries in the global South. For this reason, we intend to carry out a comparative work between the implementation of local knowledges in Brazil, Cuba, and Norway.

We agree with Kubow and Fossum (2007) when the scholars state that “The primary rationale, then, for examining educational issues in a comparative manner is to broaden one’s perspectives and sharpen one’s focus” (p. 5). Likewise, they affirm that issues in education are examined cross-culturally so that education experts may be able to increase and deepen their understanding of the issue. Moreover, in line with Kubow and Fossum, we understand that educators see educational issues from different perspectives in different countries, for this

---

<sup>27</sup> We understand the term "systematic violence" as it is used to refer to the sort of violence that is organized and purposeful performed mainly by the State. Thus, “systemic violence” is understood as opposed to the sort of violence that is much more random. For more information about “systemic violence” we indicate Abdias Nascimento (1978) the book *“O genocídio do negro brasileiro. Processo de um racismo mascarado.” The genocide of the Afro-Brazilian. A process of masked racism.*

reason it is necessary to understand the educational issues in light of differing cultural, social and political contexts in each country.

Overall, we do not advocate for the total adoption of one country's strategy by another. Rather, we agree with Kubow and Fossum (2007) when they argue for "(...) the view that awareness and understanding of the theoretical and philosophical assumptions underlying educational issues and educational form in various nations are necessary for thoughtful, informed educational practice in each nation" (p. 5). Thus, we see that Brazil, Cuba, and Norway have a lot to share and learn with each other. I.e. Brazilian educators have a lot to learn with the Cuban experience in localising the school subjects and implementing local cultural manifestations in the schools. But, the current political situation in Brazil with the recent coup d'état by extreme neoliberal forces seems to reinforce the alienating role of education in the country. For us, facilitators, it is time to fight for our country and the future generations.



## 8.0 References

- Ball, S. J. (2003). *The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity: Journal of Education Policy*. 18:2, 215-228, doi: 10.1080/0268093022000043065
- Banks, J.A., & Banks, C.A.M. (Ed.). (2010). *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*. New Jersey: Wiley.
- Bettelheim, J. & Ortiz, F. (2001). *Cuban Festivals: A Century of Afro-Cuban Culture*. Ian Randle Publishers. ISBN 1558762442, 9781558762442
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. (1997). The Forms of Capital. In Halsey A.H., Lauder H., Brown P. and Stewart-Wells A.. *Education, Culture, Economy, Society* (p. 46-58). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J. C. (1990) *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London: Newbury Park, Calif: Sage Publications.
- Breidlid, A. (2013). *Education, Indigenous Knowledges, and Development in the Global South: Contesting Knowledges for a Sustainable Future*. New York: Routledge.
- Bright, F. (2014). *Racial Relations in Cuba: Cuban Social Welfare*. Accessed at <http://crsp.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/Paper%20-%20Race%20relations%20in%20Cuba%20-%20Bright.pdf>
- Brock-Utne, B. (1996). *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research within Education in Africa*. International Review of Education: 605-621. Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Brock-Utne, B. (2014). *Language of Instruction in Africa: The Most Important and Least Appreciated Issue*. International Journal of Educational Development in Africa. Vol. 1. N 1. ISSN 2312-3540.
- Bryman, A. (2004). *Social research methods*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.
- Burbules, N. C. & Torres, C. A. (2000). *Globalization and Education: Critical perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
- Carnoy, Martin. (2007). *Cuba's Academic Advantage: Why Students in Cuba Do Better in School*. Stanford: University Press.
- Cohen, L., Morrison, K. & Manion, L. (2007). *Research methods in Education*. (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). London: Routledge.

Cruz, R. M. M. (2015, August). A Marxist focus on Comparative Education in Cuba. University of Havana. Accessed at <http://www.jceps.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/13-3-11.pdf>

Cruz-Taura, G. (2008). Revolution and continuity in the history of education in Cuba. Accessed at <http://www.academia.edu/3265675/>

Engeström, Y. (1999) Innovative learning in work teams: analysing cycles of knowledge creation in practice, in: Y. ENGESTRÖM et al (Eds.) *Perspectives on Activity Theory*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), 377-406.

Engeström, Y. (2015). *Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Ecured (2006). Círculos de Interés. Accessed on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at [https://www.ecured.cu/EcuRed:Enciclopedia\\_cubana](https://www.ecured.cu/EcuRed:Enciclopedia_cubana)

Evans-Pritchard, E.E. (1956). *The Problem of Symbols in Nuer Religion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press: p. 140-141. Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press. Abridged.

Executive Summary: SERCE (2008). *The second regional comparative and explanatory study about students achievement in Latin America and Caribbean*. Regional Bureau for Education in Latin América and the Caribbean.

Fanon, F. (1963), *The Wretched the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.

Florencio, S. V. and Neto Z. G. (2014). Implementacao de Políticas do Direito Fundamental à Saúde. Access in <https://editora.unoesc.edu.br/index.php/uils/article/download/4434/3457>

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogia do Oprimido*. (Ed. 11<sup>th</sup> . 23<sup>rd</sup> Impressao). Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.

Gedera, D. S. P. & Williams, P. J. (Eds.), Foreword by Engeström Y. (2016) *Activity Theory in Education: Research and Practice*. Rotterdam/Boston/Taipei: Sense Publishers.

Gasperini, L. (2000). *The Cuban Education System: Lesson and Dilemmas*. Country Studies, Education Reform and Management Publication Series. (Vol. I, no. 5, July 2000).

Geertz, C. (1973). *Interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books, inc.

Hall, S., Held, D. Hubert, D., Thompson, K. (1995). *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*. Blackwell Publishing.

Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (1995). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

London: Routledge.

Hurlich, S. (1998). *Creole Language and Culture: Part of Cuba's Cultural Patrimony*. Havana Access in <http://slavery.uga.edu/cuba-trip/history-of-creole-in-cuba.pdf>

Jones, P. W. (2007). *Education and World Order: Comparative Education*. 43:3, 325-337, doi: 10.1080/03050060701556273

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to Qualitative Research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage publications.

Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Los Angeles, California: Sage publications

Kubow, P. & Fossum, P. R. (2007). *Comparative Education: Exploring Issues in International Context*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New Jersey: Pearson.

Lebakeng, T. J. (2004). *Discourse on colonial epistemicide and contemporary attempts to reaffirm indigenous knowledges systems, with a particular reference to South Africa*. South African permanent mission to the United Nations, New York. Accessed at <http://ojs.mona.uwi.edu/index.php/cjp/article/viewFile/3932/3242>

Macedo, R. S. (2012). *A etnopesquisa implicada: Pertencimento, criação de saberes e afirmação*. Brasília: Liber Livro.

Marx, K. (1887). *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy: The Process of Production of Capital*. (Volume I, Book 1). Moore, S. (trans.), Aveling, E. (trans.) & Engels, F. (ed.). Progress Publishers, Moscow, USSR. (1. ed. 1867).

Marx, K. (1904). *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. Stone, N. I. (ed.). Chicago: H. Kerr and Company. (1. ed. 1859).

Matthews, H. L. (1970). *Fidel Castro: Uma Biografia Política*. Rio de Janeiro, Editora Civilizacao Brasileira S.A.

Miller, I. (2011). *Language: Abakuá in Cuba and its Influence on Spanish Usage*. Access at <http://www.afrocubaweb.com/ivormiller/miller-language-2011.pdf>

Moore, C. (2007). *Racismo e Sociedade: Novas bases epistemológicas para entender o racismo*. Belo Horizonte. Mazza Edicoes Ltda.

Moore, C. (2015). *Pichón: Minha Vida e a revolucao Cubana*. Belo Horizonte – MG. Nandyala Livros e Servicos Ltda.

Nassif, R. (2010). *José Martí*. ed; Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Editora Massangana. p.: il. – (Coleção Educadores). ISBN 978-85-7019-548-7

Ngugi, W. T. (1986). *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Languages in African Literature*. London, Jimmy Currey Ltd.1986<sup>Th</sup>.

Ohweiler, L. (2007). *A construção e implementação de políticas públicas: Desafios do Direito administrativo modern*. Verba Juris ano 6, n.6, jan. /dez 2007.

Petter, M.M.T. (1998). *Línguas especiais, línguas secretas: na África e no Brasil*. Revista da ANPOLL, 4, São Paulo : Humanitas, USP, 185-202.

Pink, S. & Morgan, J. (2013). *Short-Term Ethnography: Intense Routes to Knowing*. DOI: 10.1002/symb.66

Programas: Quinto Grado (2015). Cuba: Cuban Ministry of Education.

Rosa, M. & Orey, D. C. (2011). *Ethnomathematics: the cultural aspects of mathematics*. Revista Latinoamericana de Etnomatemática. Accessed at [https://www.usd.ac.id/fakultas/pendidikan/s2\\_pen\\_matematika/f113/An%20article%20by%20Milton%20Rosa%20%26%20Daniel%20C.%20Orey.pdf](https://www.usd.ac.id/fakultas/pendidikan/s2_pen_matematika/f113/An%20article%20by%20Milton%20Rosa%20%26%20Daniel%20C.%20Orey.pdf)

Sefa Dei, G, J. (2002). *International Review of Education*. 48: 335.  
doi:10.1023/A:1021283730231

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and indigenous people*. London and New York: Zed Books Ltd.

Soja, E. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other Real-and Imagined Places*. Oxford : Blackwell.

Travel Cuba Language. (2006) Accessed at [http://www.travel-cuba.org/cuba\\_language.html](http://www.travel-cuba.org/cuba_language.html)

Van Gennep, A. (1908). *Essai d'une théorie des langues spéciales*. Revue des Etudes Ethnographiques et sociologiques de Paris: 327,337.

Varghese, N.V., & Buchert, L. (2011). *A Report from the IWGE: Financing Education: Redesigning National Strategies and the Global Aid Architecture*. International Institute for Educational Planning. Paris, IIEP's Printshop.

## Appendices

## Appendix I: Translated Letter for Fieldwork

A quien pueda interesar

28 de Abril de 2015

Oficial ejecutiva: Ellen Solberg

### CARTA PARA FACILITACION DE ESTUDIO DEL CAMPO

Este documento es para confirmar que el estudiante, Thiago dos Reis Nascimento, nacido en 25 de Junio de 1985 es estudiante del programa de Maestria en Educacion Multicultural e Internacional ofrecido de la Facultad de Educacion y Estudios Internacionales de la Universidad de Ciencias Aplicadas de Oslo, Noruega.

En Segundo ano de programa, los estudiantes tienen que escribir una tesis de Maestria con aproximadamente 100 paginas. La tesis de Maestria debe ser basada en estudios de campo. El trabajo de campo puede incorporar entrevistas con profesionales de educacion y legisladores de leyes para educacion, observaciones dentro y fuera de sala de aula. El tipo de datos colectados deben ser discutidos con las autoridades pertinentes.

Nosotros cordialmente pedimos a ustedes que den al Sr. Thiago Nascimento, toda la asistencia posible durante su estudio del campo.

Sinceramente,

Halla Bjork Holmarsdottir

Ellen Solberg

Professora

Supervisora

Facultad de Educacion e Estudios Internacionales

Universidad de Oslo

## **Appendix II: Interview Guides for Fifth Grade Students**

### **Interview Guide # 1**

#### **Model for Fifth Grade Students**

**Thiago dos Reis Nascimento**

#### **Semi-Structured Interview**

- **Do you like your school?**  
¿Te gusta tu Escuela?
- **What do you like the most in your school?**  
¿Qué es lo que más te gusta en la Escuela?
- **Which activity related to local knowlegdes do you participate?**  
¿En cuál de las atividades con los conocimientos locales tú participas?
- **What is the importance of this activity for you?**  
¿Qué importancia tiene para ti esa actividad?
- **Does the school represent the culture of your community?**  
¿La Escuela representa la cultura de su localidad?
- **Do your parents participate in the school activities?**  
¿Sus padres participant en las actividades de la Escuela?
- **What do your parents think about activities related to local knowledges in the school?**  
¿Qué piensan sus padres de estas actividades?
- **What would you like to be when you grow up?**  
¿Qué les gustaria de ser quando sean grandes

## **Appendix III: Interview Guides Educational Specialists**

### **Interview Guide # 2**

#### **Model for Educational Specialists: Non-teachers**

**Thiago dos Reis Nascimento**

#### **Semi-Structured Interview**

- **What is your opinion of local knowledges being implemented in the primary school system?**
- ¿Qué importancia le concede a la primaria que se trabaje los conocimientos locales?
- **How would you explain what local knowledges are?**
- ¿Como usted explicaría que son los conocimientos locales?
- **(Are there local knowledges taught in this school?) (If yes, which ones and why?) If no, what might be the reasons why they are not being taught?**
- (¿Existen conocimientos locales que se imparten en esta escuela?) (En caso afirmativo , ¿cuáles y por qué? )Si no, ¿Qué limitaciones limitaría el trabajo com los conocimientos locales?
- **In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of introducing local knowledges for the students, school and society?**
- ¿En su opinion cuáles son las ventajas y desventajas de la implementación de los conocimientos locales?
- **What are students´ attitude in relation to the local knowledges?**
- **Cualés son las actitudes de los estudiantes con lo relacionado a los conocimientos locales?**
- **What are the teachers´ attitude to local knowledges?**



- ¿Cómo se siente los maestros para desarrollar este trabajo con los conocimientos locales?
- **In which subjects are the local knowledges introduced? What about the textbooks?**
- ¿En que asignatura se propicia el trabajo con los conocimientos locales? Que material didáctico se pueden utilizar?
- **Are the parents involved in the students' education in this school? If yes, what are their attitudes in relation to the local knowledges?**
- ¿Los padres están implicados en la formación del alumnado en esta escuela? En caso afirmativo ¿Cómo se relacionan los padres con las actividades de la escuela?
- **(If introduced), when, why, and how did this school implement the local knowledges to the primary curriculum?**
- ¿Cuándo comenzó el trabajo con los conocimientos locales en esta escuela.

## **Appendix IV: Interview Guides Educational Specialists**

### **Interview Guide # 3**

#### **Model for Educational Specialists: Teachers**

**Thiago dos Reis Nascimento**

#### **Semi-Structured Interview**

- **What is your opinion of local knowledges being implemented in the primary school system?**
- ¿Qué importancia le concede a la primaria que se trabaje los conocimientos locales?
- **How would you explain what local knowledges are?**
- ¿Como usted explicaría que son los conocimientos locales?
- **(Are there local knowledges taught in this school?) (If yes, which ones and why?) If no, what might be the reasons why they are not being taught?**
- (¿Existen conocimientos locales que se imparten en esta escuela?) (En caso afirmativo , ¿cuáles y por qué? )Si no, ¿Qué limitaciones limitaría el trabajo com los conocimientos locales?
- **In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of introducing local knowledges for the students, school and society?**
- ¿En su opinion cuáles son las ventajas y desventajas de la implementación de los conocimientos locales?
- **What are students´ attitude in relation to the local knowledges?**
- **Cualés son las actitudes de los estudiantes con lo relacionado a los conocimientos locales?**
- **In which subjects are the local knowledges introduced? What about the textbooks?**

- ¿En que asignatura se propicia el trabajo con los conocimientos locales?  
Que material didáctico se pueden utilizar?
- **Are the parents involved in the students' education in this school? If yes, what are their attitudes in relation to the local knowledges?**
- ¿Los padres están implicados en la formación del alumnado en esta escuela? En caso afirmativo ¿Cómo se relacionan los padres con las actividades de la escuela?
- **(If introduced), when, why, and how did this school implement the local knowledges to the primary curriculum?**
- ¿Cuándo comenzó el trabajo con los conocimientos locales en esta escuela.

## **Appendix V: Interview guide for former sub-director of Primary School Perondo Domingo.**

### **Interview # 4**

#### **Model for Informants**

#### **Semi-Structured Interview**

- **What is the Cuban Primary Educational System like?**  
¿como el Sistema Educativo de Primaria cubana?
- **What are local knowledges?**  
¿Cuáles son los conocimientos locales?
- **How did the Primary Schools implement the local knowledges?**  
¿Cómo las escuelas primarias implementarám los conocimientos locales?
- **In which subjects are the local knowledges introduced? What about the textbooks?**  
  
¿En que asignatura se propicia el trabajo con los conocimientos locales?  
Que material didáctico se pueden utilizar?
- **Are the parents involved in the students' education in this school? If yes, what are their attitudes in relation to the local knowledges?**  
  
¿Los padres están implicados en la formación del alumnado en esta escuela? En caso afirmativo ¿Cómo se relacionam los padres con las actividades de la escuela?
- **In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of introducing local knowledges for the students, school and society?**  
  
¿En su opinion cuáles son las ventajas y desventajas de la implementación de los conocimientos locales?
- **When did the Cuban Primary Educational System implement local knowledges?**  
¿Cuándo el Sistema Educativo de Primaria cubana implementó los conocimientos locales?

## **Appendix VI: Interview Guide for the Parents' Council President**

### **Interview Guide # 5**

#### **Model for Parents' Council President**

**Thiago dos Reis Nascimento**

#### **Semi-Structured Interview**

- **What is the function of the parent's council?**
  - ¿Cuál es la función del consejo de la escuela?
- **How often do the parents get together?**
  - ¿Con qué frecuencia los padres se reúnen?
- **How do the parents help in the school?**
  - ¿Cómo los padres ayudan en la escuela?
- **What is the relation between school and community?**
  - ¿Cuál es la relación entre la escuela y la comunidad?
- **Does the school represent the culture of the community?**
  - ¿La escuela representa la cultura de la comunidad?
- **Can you tell me about your education?**
  - ¿Me puede decir acerca de su educación?
- **Do the parents help their children with school activities?**
  - ¿Los padres ayudan a sus hijos en las actividades escolares?
- **What happens if the parents do not do their obligations with their children's school activities?**
  - ¿Qué ocurre si los padres no hacen sus obligaciones con las actividades escolares de los niños?
- **What is the role of the state if the parents hesitate to do their obligations with school issues of their children?**
  - ¿cuál es el papel del Estado si los padres dudan en hacer sus obligaciones con los asuntos de la escuela de sus hijos?

- **What happens if a family cant afford to keep their children in school?**
- ¿Qué pasa si una familia no puede permitirse el lujo de mantener a sus hijos en la escuela?

### Appendix VII: Work Schedule for data collection

CRONOGRAMA DE TRABAJO THIAGO DOS REIS NASCIMENTO DE MAESTRIA EN EDUCACION  
MULTICULTURAL E INTERNACIONAL  
Escuela Primaria: Pedro Domingo Murillo, Mariano, Septiembre 2015

JUEVES 24	VIERNES 25	LUNES 28	MARTES 29	MIERCOLES 30	JUEVES 1	VIERNES 2
Encuentro inicial Practica	Mañana Observación	Observación 9:00 am Clase Computación	8:00 9:00 Jefe de Depto de Educación y Cultura Educativos Educativos Educativos	9:00 am Observación de Clase Lengua Española	9:00 am Observación Clase Historia	Atención a tarjas y monumentos Recorrido
Estudio Instrumento	9:00 am Entrevista Directora DISE	11:00 am Observación Clase Educación Física Educadora / Alumna	Entrevistas Asociación de Combate de la Revolución Cultural y Presidente del Consejo de Escuelas	11:00 am Entrevista Grupo 5to	11:00 am Observación de Educación Cívica	Centros de Interés C. Libertad Museo Alcaldía Obelisco, Tarja
Recepción y Familiarización	11:00 Entrevistas Alumnas de 5to grado	Observación Almuerzo y Descanso de 11:00 - 5pm	11:00 am *Geo. Linares? 11:00 am *Dobos. Tellechea Dpto.	11:30 pm Entrevista Instructora de Arte	11:30 am Observación de Ciclo Programa Ciclo de Interés	11:30 am Cierre
Entrevistas Directora C. Cultural		Observación 2:30 pm Biblioteca	Almuerzo	1:00 pm Observación actividades culturales Instructora de Arte	2:00 pm C. Interés aud visual, plantas medicinales, corte y costura	
Entrevista jefe de Ciclo			2:00 pm Observación Centro Cultural			
Entrevista a Café Base (maestra Ana)			3:00 pm Observación Tele - Clase P. y S. Sta			

*Entrevista con  
4 vice directores/Coordinador*

*12/15: visita a Lano*

## **Appendix VIII: Letter for the Cuban Ministry of Education**

### **Informe**

Yo, Thiago dos Reis Nascimento, ciudadano brasileño, quiero por medio de este documento público informar al Ministerio de Educación de Cuba situado en la Ciudad de La Habana que todas las etapas del estudio comparativo entre Brasil y Cuba fueron efectuadas de forma funcional y efectiva. El estudio intensivo sobre la implementación de los conocimientos locales en la educación primaria inició sus actividades el día 24 de septiembre y se finalizó el 3 de octubre de 2015. El estudio siguió todas las orientaciones éticas y metodológicas supervisadas por el Ministerio de Educación de Cuba. Deste modo, agradezco especialmente a la Viceministra Cira Piñero por autorizarme a adentrar e intercambiar con los profesionales y especialistas en educación de la Escuela Primaria Pedro Domingo Murillo situada en el municipio de Marianao en Ciudad Escolar Libertad.

Destaco la importancia del papel del metodólogo del Ministerio de Educación, Alfonso Cok Carballo, como mi supervisor local en este estudio. Me quedé impresionado con su seriedad y compromiso en la orientación de las etapas y cronograma del estudio comparado. La importancia de trabajar con intelectuales locales tiene el objetivo de descolonizar el estudio de modo a dar más espacio para nuevas voces del globo sur en la producción del conocimiento. Por eso, trabajo también con el Prof. Dr. Roberto Macedo de la Universidade Federal da Bahia – Salvador, como supervisor local en las actividades en Brasil. De esta forma, intento balancear la relación de poder en la producción de conocimiento como me orientó mi supervisor de análisis de datos y redacción de este estudio, Anders Breidlid de Oslo University - Noruega.

Agradezco a la Directora de Escuela Primaria Pedro Domingo Murillo, Alina Verde León, por el completo entendimiento de la relevancia del estudio sobre la implementación de los conocimientos locales en la educación primaria. De la misma forma, agradezco a todo el personal administrativo y docente de la escuela en especial a Maité Larrinaga García, jefa de ciclo; Ana Margarita Cadenas Martínez, también jefa de ciclo; Tania Pompa Borrell, guía base, a las maestras de 5º grado Reina Villavicencio Núñez, Yuneisy Oliva Hernández y Mercedes Reyes Benítez. Agradezco a la Dirección Municipal de Educación de Marianao; en especial, a la representante que me asignaron: Olga Cordero Jiménez por su importante papel en el acompañamiento y organización de las actividades desarrolladas dentro y fuera de la Escuela Primaria Pedro Domingo Murillo. Agradezco también al consejo escolar por el



entendimiento del estudio y en representación de los padres y la comunidad, al Presidente Del Consejo Escolar, Roberto Blanco Bueno.

Concluyo así que esta experiencia como estudiante en Cuba fue altamente enriquecedora para mi trayectoria como un militante de la educación pública y gratuita para todos. La relación entre estado, familia y comunidad, o sea todos juntos por la educación de los niños, fue el punto de partida para entender el modelo educativo de Cuba. A partir de esta política educativa de estado, percibí que la implementación de los conocimientos locales en la educación primaria, además de ser parte del proceso de construcción de la identidad de los estudiantes, es también una orientación epistemológica de enseñanza y aprendizaje.

Epopéyas cubanas como la campaña de alfabetización de 1961 y la propia revolución de 1959 dejan a sus hermanos y hermanas latino-afro-indígena-americanos de países vecinos y lejanos con una esperanza en el cambio de la situación actual de la educación. Un cambio social, intelectual y altruista que pueda libertar cada ciudadano de esos países de las alienaciones e ilusiones imperialistas.

**Thiago dos Reis Nascimento.**

**Estudiante brasileño**

## **Appendix IX – Personal communication**

### **List of informants:**

Afonso Cok , primary methodologist from the Cuban Ministry of Education.

Perondo Domingo, former sub-director of the Cuban Primary Educational System in Havana.

Caridad Robio, the Arts Institute principal of Ciudad Libertad- Marianao.

Maite Garcia , the chief of the cycle (fifth and sixth grades).

Anaire Ortega, the chief of education of Marianao.

Alina Verde, the principal of the Primary school Pedro Domingo Murillo – Ciudad Libertad – Marianao.

Reina Núñez , fifth grade teacher of the Primary school Pedro Domingo Murillo – Ciudad Libertad – Marianao.

Mercedes Reyes Benítez, fifth grade teacher of the Primary school Pedro Domingo Murillo – Ciudad Libertad – Marianao.

Roberto Bueno, “presidente del Consejo de la Escuela ”, the president of the local parents’ council