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A Comparison of the Quality of Education between Southeast Asia and Latin America

Intro

Every child has the right to an education. Education is a crucial component of a nation's growth and relates to every sustainable development goal. There are 2 regions that are strikingly similar in terms of industry, history, and education: Latin America and Southeast Asia. Both regions are rich in land and natural resources, tropical, have rapidly growing urban cities, and were heavily colonized by European powers. The aftermath of European colonization in these regions left many countries in vulnerable conditions. Places like the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Nicaragua, and Guatemala were left in third-world conditions after foreign rulers fled. Abandoned on their own to construct governments, social services, and maintain peace, these countries were left in difficult situations. Thus many of these regions have trouble today developing their education, healthcare, and justice sectors, just to name a few.

Case studies

This presentation will look at the case of 4 countries: 2 in Latin America and 2 in Southeast Asia. The 2 countries in Latin America are Cuba and Nicaragua; the 2 countries in Southeast Asia are Indonesia and Singapore. Cuba and Singapore outperform all their counterparts in their respective region while Nicaragua and Indonesia underperform their counterparts.

Nicaragua

Nicaragua has had a tumultuous history with the United States. In the 80's during the communist scare, President Reagan was committed to overthrowing the communist government of Nicaragua. He trained rebels, or *contras*, to defeat the Sandinista regime. Reagan's administration funded the

training and supplies the contras with guns using illegal funds, resulting the the Iran-Contra Affair. At the same time, these contras that the US trained killed thousands of men, women, and children under the pretense of being the local government, or the FSLN, in order to spite hatred towards the FSLN. Many Nicaraguans still remember this bloody time until this day, and much of Nicaragua is still affected by the aftermath of the violence.. A developing and mostly rural country, this poorest Spanish speaking country in Latin America has much to do achieve terms of Education.

Cuba

On the other end of the spectrum with a 100% literacy rate among the youth, Cuba is brimming with success stories. While it still has the economy of a developing nation, its education system has surpassed all expectations. Special educational outreach programs like the Rural Outreach Program and Attention to Special Needs set Cuba apart from the rest of Latin America. During Fidel Castro's rule, education was regarded as a key component to the continued loyalty of the people. Castro also lifted women out of domestic work and placed them in schools; there is currently proportional female representation at all levels. Truancy and bad behaviour in school is rare. Free lunches and afterschool programs make school very popular. Cuba is an example for the rest of Latin America.

Indonesia

Indonesia is comprised of nearly 18,000 islands. With a population of 260 million people, Indonesia is home to a vast number of cultures, peoples, and languages. With such a large population, the system of education cannot simply be streamlined. Thus local provinces and regions, much like states, are given autonomy over their own education systems. At local schools, the local language, the official

language of Indonesia, and English is taught. Education is mandatory for 9-12 years, depending on the province. While 86% of students are Muslim, only 15% attend religious schools, or Madrassas. The government has no official authority over the education system; local rulers are given full power. Thus Indonesia's education system is hard to define, though it still needs improvement.

Singapore

Singapore went from a 3rd world country to a 1st world country in 50 years. How? Through an intense and successful education system. In 1965, after escaping rule from the British, the elected prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, understood that education needed to be the nation's priority. He instituted highly qualified officials into his government, paid them generously, and created well-defined education policies. Today, Singapore enjoys one of the highest standards of living and is consistently ranked highly in PISA tests among the world.

Comparing the two regions

Many factors need to be considered when looking at the quality of education in a country. Geography, population size, government commitment and priority, consistency, and government spending are all important things to note.

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