



Photograph: Dominican Republic: Youth playing baseball in Las Galeras. iStock Photo ID: 50056758

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR BASEBALL PROSPECTS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

January 2022

This publication was produced at the request of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It was prepared by ENTRENA, Grupo Línea Base, and DevTech Systems, Inc with collaboration from USAID.

Sent to: Regional Office for Sustainable Development of the USAID Latin American and Caribbean Bureau (LAC/RSD).

Developed by: ENTRENA and Grupo Línea Base; Edition by DevTech Systems, Inc. from July 13, 2020 through May 15, 2021 under Cooperative Agreement No. AID-517-A-12-00002.



This report is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of ENTRENA and Grupo Línea Base and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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ACRONYMS

PPA	Public Private Alliance
BCRD	Central Bank of the Dominican Republic
CDC	Center for Disease Control and Prevention
CONANI	Dominican National Council for Childhood and Adolescence
FEDOB	Dominican Baseball Federation (Amateur Baseball)
HDI	Human Development Index
INABIE	National Institute of Student Welfare
INEFI	National Institute of Physical Education
INFOTEP	National Institute of Professional Technical Training
JCE	Central Electoral Board
JEE	Extended School Day
LIDOM	Professional Baseball League of the Dominican Republic
MIC	Ministry of Industry, Trade and Small Medium Enterprises (SME)
MINERD	Ministry of Education of the Dominican Republic
MIDEREC	Ministry of Sports and Recreation of the Dominican Republic
MiLB	Minor League Baseball
MLB	Major League Baseball
MLBPA	Major League Baseball Players Association
PGR	Attorney General's Office of the Dominican Republic
TERCE	Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study of UNESCO
SIUBEN	Government Conditional Transfer Program
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UNESCO	United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The study *Educational Opportunities of Baseball Prospects in the Dominican Republic* is the product of a collaboration between USAID, ENTRENA and Grupo Línea Base in coordination with the National Commissioner of Baseball in the Dominican Republic. The following people played key roles in the authorship and development of this study:

- Patricia Mones, Carlos Ramos, Alex García and Johanna Vásquez – Grupo Línea Base
- Michael Lisman – Education Team Lead, USAID Bureau for Latin America, and the Caribbean
- John Seibel – President of Entrena DR and Study Supervisor

The authors wish to thank USAID / Dominican Republic for commissioning this report, in particular Jeffrey Levine and Mariela Peña from the Office of Youth, Education, and Security. Furthermore, we are indebted to the 25-person consulting committee composed of significant stakeholders on this issue in the Dominican Republic including Major League Baseball (MLB), including representatives, teams, independent trainers, educational specialists, government officials and civil society. Their guidance and sharing of resources, contacts and ideas have been fundamental to not only ensuring integration of a wide range of perspectives on this topic, but to helping set forth a forum for transparent and objective discussion of the complex interrelating aspects of education, youth, sport, and industry addressed in this report.

We acknowledge the invaluable support we have received from the Office of the Commissioner of Baseball of the Dominican Republic under the leadership of Junior Noboa in the preparation and dissemination of this study. We also recognize the contributions of the DR Ministry of Education (MINERD) whose specialists participated in our stakeholders meeting and shared resources with us including their December 2017 report on education and baseball prospects.

Lastly, and most importantly, we would like to thank the main protagonists of the activity: the teenagers and adolescents who dream of becoming professional players, their parents and guardians, and the hundreds of leagues and independent programs that participated in this process.

The study *Educational Opportunities for Baseball Prospects in the Dominican Republic* was implemented under the USAID Cooperative Agreement and Entrena No. AID-517-A-12-00002 (Dominican Republic At-Risk Youth Activity) known in Spanish as Alerta Joven. Since 2012, this project has impacted more than 150,000 vulnerable young people and adolescents from ages 11 to 24 in 450 communities in the country, reducing levels of violence through education, employability, entrepreneurship, life skills, job insertion, and health programs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Objective

The main objective of this study is to understand informal baseball training programs and the education of baseball prospects in the Dominican Republic. The study primarily focuses on identifying opportunities for improvement in the prospects' educational outcomes for those youth who never sign a contract with a Major League Baseball (MLB) team, which is estimated in 97% of all prospects. The study also explores the educational context of those who do sign a contract, but do not reach the Major Leagues, despite playing in the minor leagues for several years. In addition, the study aims to integrate perspectives of the different participating actors that affect the (1) informal training industry and (2) overall development of the prospects (i.e. Ministry of Education, parents, etc.) Lastly, the study identifies areas of opportunity for addressing educational disparities or trade-offs for young prospects and their families.

Context

Baseball is recognized as the most popular sport in the Dominican Republic and as a national pastime. It was introduced to the country at the end of the nineteenth century, becoming more popular during the first half of the twentieth century with the formation of professional teams composed of national and international stars. From 1953, and after Jackie Robinson broke the racial barrier in the American professional league in 1947, Dominican players began signing contracts with MLB teams, impressing fans with their skills and achievements.

Over the years, the economic incentives of becoming a professional baseball player have made this career path part of the imagination of young people who, in many cases, see baseball as an opportunity to overcome economic poverty. This growing interest has led to the development of an informal training industry that offers training services to prospects and connects them with recruiters from MLB teams.

Eight Main Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, which are laid out in the next section of this summary, eight alternatives are proposed to improve prospects' outcomes in schools and educational development. The bases for these recommendations are the educational interests, safety and well-being, and future development of young Dominican prospects. Recognizing the extraordinarily important economic and cultural role that baseball plays in the Dominican Republic, these recommendations also attempt to consider and address the interests of all key actors and stakeholders involved in the various stages of the preparation, signing, and future development of baseball prospects.

Each recommendation is presented in further detail in Chapter 6, and in alignment with major findings from the report. A summary of the 8 recommendations is the following:

- 1. Promote the development and management of schools specialized in sports and finance them with public-private partnerships.** The schools would focus on the specific needs (emotional, academic, mental) of young prospects who aspire to become professional

players. At the same time, this could be an important effort to formalize the industry by using the educational component as a common platform.

2. **Expand the scope and variety of sports activities and tournaments in public schools**, which will foster integration between academics, life skills, and athletic activities. Baseball, with limited exceptions, is not practiced or played in public school settings.
3. **Provide prospects from the informal sector with academic, life skills, and psychological counseling**, concentrating on those geographic zones with many training programs. Research from the DR and other locations shows that well-structured counseling can help young prospects to have greater awareness of their time invested in baseball related to the time they invest to study and learn.
4. **Raise awareness of the real chances of signing a contract and progressing along a career path in baseball** among young prospects, as the majority tend to overestimate their odds and likely income. The dream of signing a professional contract is an important motivation factor but needs to be tempered by reality and alternatives.
5. **Promote programs that improve the awareness and knowledge among families on the importance of staying in school and attending regularly**. Most parents do not understand the relationship between higher education levels and future income and improved possibilities for their children. This study and prior research find that increased participation in baseball training programs does tend to interrupt the education sequencing for their children, and that personal information campaigns (or “nudges”) can help course-correct decisions related to potential educational trade-offs.
6. **Leverage the proliferation of evidence-based educational and training programs**, such as those supported by the US Embassy and donor organizations in the DR. These include accelerated learning, school reinsertion and retention programs, employability training activities which integrate both life and technical skills, and workshops which foster improved parental and family responsibilities. These also include specialized reading programs, anti-bullying training and fostering environments of dialogue. Key interventions when correctly applied at the proper key moments in the career of the young prospect can make critical differences in life outcomes, both on and off the baseball field.
7. **Help channel prospect’s deference to their trainers toward educational outcomes**, which can be supported through micro-subsidy programs. This will support those trainers who truly believe in good educational outcomes for their prospects and could be emulated throughout the system.
8. **Increase public information campaigns that promote transparent and informed discussion around regulation of children’s and adolescents’ interactions with professional teams as part of the new sports law being developed in 2021 by the DR Ministry of Sports**. The well-being of all children, adolescents and youth needs to be the most important focus of all actors involved in the baseball industry, including the parents. These campaigns can capitalize the Dominican passion for baseball to inject positive change for all involved in the baseball industry, especially for those young prospects who will never sign.

Report Methodology

To develop an objective and evidence-based picture of how the baseball industry works, a mixed methodology was implemented for data collection and analyses in this report, with three main data collection components:

- 1. Identification of 800 training programs:** Considering that the training programs are informal and that there is no systematic record of them, the study mapped out programs in pre-identified high incidence provinces. In that process, the study identified 800 informal leagues.
- 2. Survey of 535 prospects:** We selected a representative sample of the prospects from those identified leagues, with the purpose of applying a survey on education, family, and baseball practices.
- 3. Focus groups (7) and interviews (12):** We conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups where open questions on the same subjects were asked to the young prospects, parents, independent trainers, team and MLB representatives, educational specialists, and related public sector agencies.

Main Findings

Finding 1: *The Path Followed by Prospects*

Young prospects begin their baseball practices at age 8 or 9 for recreational purposes and subsequently develop the aspiration to play professionally. When prospects decide that they would like to play professionally, their parents and or legal guardians make agreements with informal sector trainers who will provide training hours in exchange for a pre-established percentage of the signing bonus in the case that the prospect signs a contract with an MLB team. Both parents and prospects tend to perceive these agreements as fair, as they do not make any payments to the trainers until the time of signing. Although there are different training models, this is the most popular.

Prospects go through different training programs until they reach the ages of 14 to 15 when their baseball playing potential is evaluated and can be projected. At this stage, they begin to participate in more intensive programs that are usually led by trainers who are more connected to MLB team recruiters. It is common for such programs to offer accommodations, especially to prospects from provinces outside Santo Domingo. Between the ages of 15 and 16, prospects are recruited and receive a contract to play in the local minor leagues. After this age, it is exceedingly difficult for prospects to sign a contract because the most promising prospects have already been identified and signed by this age. The average signing age has traditionally been estimated at 16.5 years based upon the July 2 date of the year the prospect turns 17. This date has since been modified to January 15 as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Prospects who do sign a contract must go through the distinct stages of the minor leagues before they become professional players. The first of these stages is to play in the Dominican Summer League¹ (LDV, for its acronym in Spanish) on one of the MLB 30 plus teams, and to train intensively with them in one of their complexes in the country. Most players do not advance beyond this stage to play in a minor league tournament in the United States. During each stage, only a small proportion moves to the next and most are let go or *released*.

Prospects, who sign a professional contract, receive educational services at their team's DR academy with follow up at minor league levels (usually a combination of continued high school, English, computers, life skills) that are valuable, regardless of continuing on with their baseball career or being released. However, the significant majority of prospects practicing in the informal industry do not sign a contract and therefore cannot access these educational benefits.

Finding 2: Characteristics of the Families of Prospects

The prospects were surveyed about their family structures and their parents' educational attainment. 14.8% of the surveyed prospects do not live with any parent, while 30.6% live with only one parent and the rest live with both parents. 84.3% of the surveyed prospects have access to water within their home, which suggests that the **prospects do not belong to the lowest income levels of the country compared to the rest of the population**. Similarly, results of the trainers' focus groups demonstrate an awareness of an evolution in the socioeconomic profile of prospects in recent years. As for parents' educational attainment, the highest degree most often achieved was to complete secondary school (high school): 22% for mothers and 22% for fathers. 41% of prospects reported that neither of their parents completed secondary education while 33% said that only one of the two completed this level.

Finding 3: Educational History of Prospects

96% of prospects were enrolled in the 2019 – 2020 school year; 70.6% did so in a public school and 25.2% in a private school. 45% of them attended a morning schedule and 12% did so on weekends or in nightly schedule which is part of the adult education subsystem. In focus groups, prospects who are one year away from the signing age, approximately 16 years old, tend to follow these schedules and had taken at least the last two years by the time they turn 16. It was further noted that the prospects do not distinguish differences in terms of quality between the regular and the schedule for adults. Furthermore, many prospects attend irregular schedules not authorized by the Ministry of Education of the Dominican Republic (MINERD) in the final year prior to receiving a signing contract.

For the 2019 – 2020 school year, most of the surveyed prospects (54%) attended the sixth grade of the primary level or the first, second and third grades of the secondary levels (US Equivalent 7th to 9th grade): 12% attended sixth grade of the primary level while 17%, 12% and 13% attended the first, second and third grades of the secondary level respectively. It is important to note that when comparing prospects' dates of birth with the grade they were in, 23.7% of them were older than the

¹ Minor league tournament.

corresponding age for the grade they were attending. According to local studies, being older than the corresponding age for the grade is the main risk factor for high school drop-out in the country.

At the same time, prospects indicated that structured sports programs in schools were virtually non-existent, so practicing sports always comes detached from formal school activity. In focus groups, prospects criticized the lack of equipment and the lack of intensive programs available in any athletic discipline.

Finding 4: *Characteristics of Common Baseball Practices*

65% of the interviewed prospects play baseball every day; 23.9% play it more than 20 hours a week and 21.2% do so between 15 and 20 hours. 40% of prospects practice in the morning hours, 37% in the afternoon and 23% practice both in the morning and afternoon. The schedule between school and baseball varies considerably depending on whether the program supplies accommodations. Irregular school attendance issues are more common in the leagues that supply accommodation. These issues involve taking classes remotely or only meeting few times a week, even before the COVID-19 pandemic. Experts consulted expressed concern about the lack of follow-up of these practices and study schedules, and the potential for prospects not allocating enough time to study.

Parents and prospects valued positively the trainers' work, with prospects having admiration and respect for them. Generally, trainers are former players who were released at some stage in the minor leagues. In addition, parents welcomed their children's participation in training programs, calling these a healthy and distracting environment away from criminal activities.

Finding 5: *Expectations of Educational Achievement Among Prospects*

Most players consulted in focus groups admit that lack of education leads to precarious and informal jobs, and that high school and potential university attendance is a path to higher income levels and a source of pride for their family members. In that regard, most prospects mentioned that having a high school degree was within their aspirations. When asked what they would do if they did not receive a contract, 92% of the surveyed prospects said they would resume their studies. Similarly, 79% of them said their parents want them to go to college or get a high school diploma. Although prospects attributed economic value to education, they did not attribute social value to it. Likewise, most parents and prospects interviewed were not able to cite any specific higher education programs available to them.

Finding 6: *Risk Preferences Among Prospects*

Industry experts consulted estimate that less than 5% of prospects who practice with professional aspirations receive a contract. In 2019, only 3% of all prospects who signed up to be eligible to sign a contract with an MLB team ultimately signed a contract. Despite these long odds, prospects' perceptions remain rosy. When asked about which percentage of their league mates they think would receive a contract, most said more than 20%. At the same time, in focus groups prospects reported

that the possibilities of receiving a contract are “very low”, but when they gave the exact number, it was much higher than what experts estimate the real 3 to 5% number is.

This perception might indicate **that young people do not really know how risky the investment in time they make in baseball truly is** or how safe the investment in education is. In any case, official statistics on how risky each path actually are scarce or non-existent for the country, making it difficult to inform prospects in order to induce behavioral changes and to increase their time allocation and effort to academic activities.

CHAPTER I. METHODOLOGY

This study presents the results of an extensive analysis of the functioning of the informal baseball training industry in the Dominican Republic and how it relates to the educational opportunities of the young adolescents that participate in it. The study focuses on both the young players who manage to sign a professional contract with an MLB team, as well as those who never sign a professional contract. In addition, the study integrates the perspectives of the different stakeholders that affect the operation of the industry and the integral development of the young players. The study adopted a mixed methodology, using a **qualitative approach** (for in-depth information) on one hand and, on the other hand, a **quantitative approach** (to identifying trends of interest). For consistency, adolescent males that practice baseball will be referred to as *Prospects*. The individuals who own and provide services of baseball training within the informal industry will be referred to as *Trainers*.

1.1 Research Questions

Answering specific questions was key to estimating the scope and characteristics of the industry, including training academies and prospects. The following research questions guided the research process:

1. *What are the characteristics of young Dominicans who participate in these programs and academies? How do these characteristics compare to those of young people who do not play baseball (both at school and outside)?*
2. *What are prospects’ and their families’ general perception of the value of education?*
3. *What are prospects’ and their families’ general perception regarding the likelihood of having a viable career through baseball?*
4. *How do prospects, parents, communities, and MLB staff perceive the educational needs and opportunities of informal industry prospects, and what do they think are the post-workout options for baseball?*
5. *What rules and regulations exist to monitor training programs?*

6. *What types of communication or coordination exist between training programs, authorities and MLB?*
7. *What are the levels of school achievement of prospects, and how do they compare to other vulnerable or at-risk young people in similar communities and populations?*
8. *What education options are available in informal program facilities for both programs with and without housing accommodations?*
9. *What are prospects' obstacles to staying in school when embarking on training programs, and in what proportion do these players/students drop out of school to pursue baseball?*
10. *What ideas do different stakeholders have to improve the educational opportunities of young baseball prospects?*
11. *How do different stakeholders see the importance of addressing educational issues in the informal training industry?*
12. *Which stakeholders are most responsible for addressing these issues? Which stakeholders are best equipped to address them?*

1.2 Data Collection

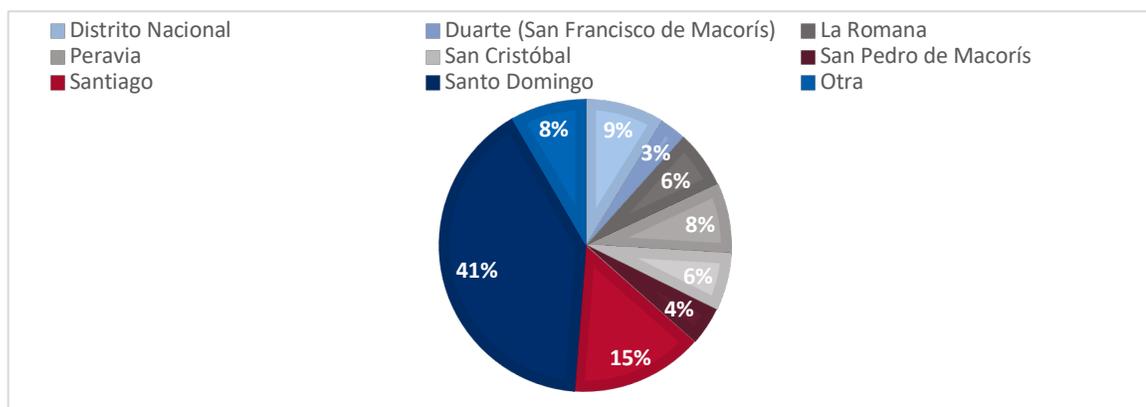
To obtain information that would allow us to answer these research questions, we conducted three stages of data collection.

a. Identification of Training Programs

As of mid-2020, there was no official list of informal baseball training programs in the country and by the date of the publication of this study (December 2021), there is still no official list. Thus, it was necessary to do a network sampling (or snowball) conducted to identify and characterize them. Together with experts, we decided to concentrate the efforts in the provinces that traditionally have had the highest concentration of informal training: San Pedro de Macorís, La Romana, San Cristóbal, Puerto Plata, Santiago, Duarte, Santo Domingo and the Distrito Nacional.

The identification process was made from an initial list of 320 programs compiled by a group of 10 well-known trainers from the informal sector. With that list, a group of trained surveyors gathered information. For three weeks, 802 lead training programs were surveyed in the provinces studied.

Chart I. Training Programs Identified, by Province



Source: Authors with telephone mapping data

The identified programs were studied in relation to their operations and the public they serve. 78% of the interviews conducted were answered by the league owner, 13% by the league director and 8% by a league coach. For purposes of clarification, a “league owner” is a person with financial investments and expectations of future financial returns. A “director” or “coach” usually do not have a financial investment but may receive some type of compensation related to a signing bonus. When asked about why young people attend training, most programs receive both prospects that play for recreational purposes and prospects who aspire to become professionals (56%).

Table I. Why do prospects attend the league?

Reasons for attending the informal league	Quantity	%
To sign a contract with a professional team	271	34%
For recreational purposes	85	11%
Both reasons	446	56%
Total	802	100%

Source: Authors with telephone mapping data

The identified programs have 72.4 players enrolled on average, and 21% of the programs supply housing accommodation to at least one player. In total, these programs receive 57,800 prospects, of which only 1,544 reside in the academy. It is important to note that the programs that offer accommodations do so for an average of 48% of their registered players; that is, it is common to offer both accommodation and non-accommodation services within the same program. 77.2% of the programs receive at least one player aged 9 years or younger; 95.4% receive players aged 10 to 15.5; 62.7% receive players aged 15 to 19; and only 19% train players over the age of 20. These results suggest that the programs offer mixed services to players for different purposes and at distinct stages of their development cycle.

b. Interest Trends among Young People who Practice Baseball in Identified Leagues

This study defined lines of analysis based on the topics identified as relevant. With them, a closed information collection tool was developed for a sample of prospects from the identified leagues.

Using the identified leagues, a lead sample of the resulting framework was selected. An instrument was developed that collected information around four lines of analysis. Table 2 presents the four lines and a summary of the questions asked.²

Table 2. Lines of Analysis

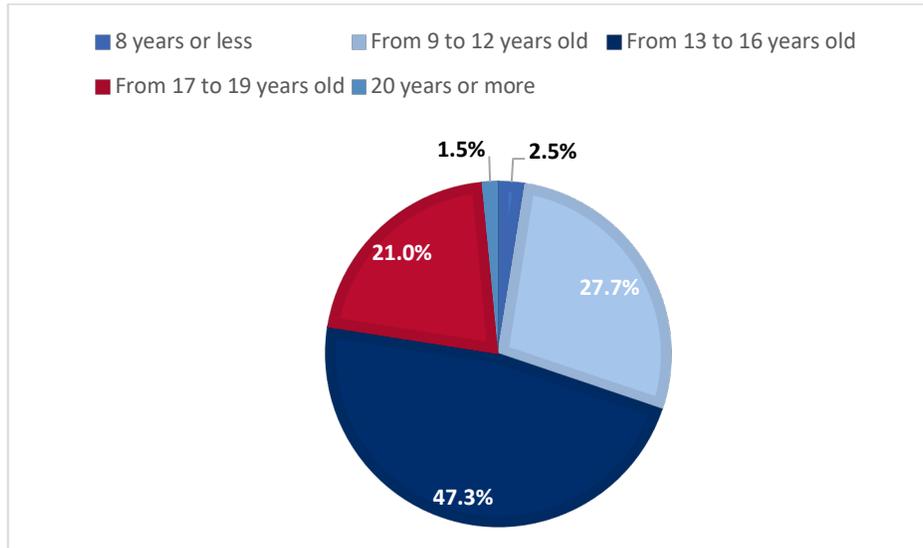
Line of Analysis	Summary of Topics
Personal and family characteristics	Age – Family composition – Persons with whom you reside – Type of area of residence – Educational level of parents.
Information about educational history	Last grade completed – Characteristics of their school, teachers and peers – Schedule in which they attend school.
Baseball practices and training time	Starting age in baseball – Positions which they play – Injury history – Experience in <i>Tryouts</i> – Perceived signature probability – Signing age.
Educational expectations and risk preferences	Knowledge of higher education opportunities – Options for a career other than baseball – Social and economic return of education.

Source: Authors

The survey was applied in person, in digital format, to a total of 535 young people who were training at the time of the visit. Of these, 96% were between the age of 9 and 19.

² The sample is only representative of the framework for which it was built, not of the general population. A two-stage sample was performed, using training programs as clusters with a margin of error of 5%, and a 95% confidence level.

Chart 2. Ages of Surveyed Prospects (Years)



Source: Authors with survey data for prospects

c. In-depth Interviews and Focus Groups

Using the same lines of analysis considered for the lead survey, two additional collection efforts were made. For the first collection effort, seven focus groups were organized:

- A focus group with MLB staff, team representatives, and independent trainers from the MLB Trainer Partnership program.
- Three focus groups with prospects aged 13 to 15
- A focus group with prospects aged 16 to 19
- A focus group with prospects sleeping in the accommodations of their training programs
- A focus group with the prospects' parents

Each focus group involved 6 to 10 people. The instruments used in each focus group contained open questions framed to the lines of analysis presented in Table 2. Finally, twelve in-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholder representatives according to the classification conducted in the analysis of key players. Interviews were conducted with stakeholders from the baseball industry and the education sector, who offered their perspectives related to the lines of analysis defined for the other collection efforts.

CHAPTER 2. SOCIOECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT IN THE BASEBALL INDUSTRY

2.1 Socio-Economic Context

The Dominican Republic (DR) is a small and open economy that ranks eighth in Latin America and first in the Central American and Caribbean sub-region in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In recent decades, the DR has been one of the countries with the highest economic growth rates thanks to tourism, remittances, foreign direct investment, mining, free trade zones and telecommunications (World Bank, 2020). The services sector is the most important in the economy, accounting for 60% of GDP and 73% of employment (BCRD, 2020).

This economic growth has allowed for progress in several social indicators: between 2000 and 2019, life expectancy increased from 70.6 to 74.1 years; infant mortality decreased from 33.1 deaths per 1,000 live births to 24.1; and access to primary education became universal, with a net coverage rate of 95% in 2019. Thus, the country raised its Human Development Index (HDI) from a coefficient of 0.66 in 2000 to 0.756 in 2019, catalogued with "High Human Development" since 2014 (UNDP, 2020).

However, this economic growth has slowed over the past decade while maintaining an above-average GINI index ratio in Latin America because of, among other factors, informal work and low wages. In 2019, 54.8% of existing jobs belonged to the informal sector, and the average hourly income was USD\$ 2.20. At that average hourly income, a full-time worker would still earn 36.4% less than the full-time income required to meet the most inexpensive family basket (BCRD, 2020).

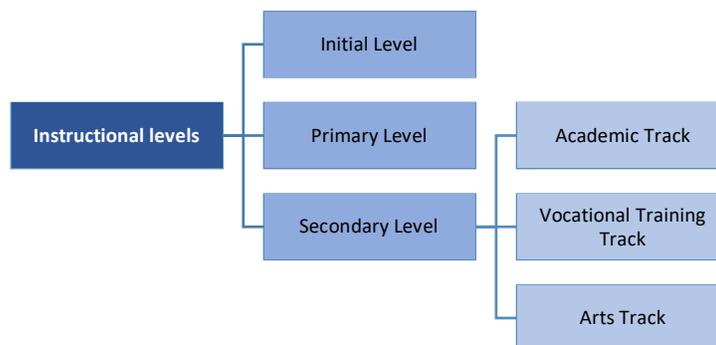
Additionally, the country has a high unemployment rate among young people, a situation that makes them more vulnerable to living in poverty. In 2019, the monetary poverty rate for individuals 10- to 14-years-old reached 34.1%, higher than the national rate of 23.6% (MEPYD, 2020). Moreover, 33% of males between the ages of 9 and 15 lived in low-quality housing and 21% lived without access to adequate health services (BCRD, 2020). In 2020, 40% of males between ages 9 and 15 lived in households receiving government subsidies for low-income populations and 34% of children and adolescents between ages 9 and 15 did not have health insurance. However, 98% of children and adolescents in this age group were enrolled in school (BCRD, 2020).

2.2 Educational Context

The country's K-12 education system is structured into three levels of instruction: Initial, Primary, and Secondary. Each level is divided into two academic cycles and each cycle into three grades. Overall, instructional levels comprise the first 18 years of the student's life, spanning six years per level. The MINERD considers that the ideal or theoretical ages are 0 to 5 years old to go through the initial level, 6 to 11 years old for the primary level, and from 12 to 18 years old for

the secondary level. In addition, the MINERD also administers the system for the education of young people and adults, under which primary and secondary levels are taught with flexibility.^{3,4}

Chart 3. Structure of the Dominican Education System



Source: Authors

As for its administrative structure, the system is organized into four levels: a central office, regional offices, school districts and the schools. In total, there are 18 regional offices, divided into 122 education districts, in which 11,272 public, private and semi-professional schools operate (MINERD, 2020). These centers serve 2,807,279 students, equivalent to 26.3% of the Dominican population (MINERD, 2020) (ONE, 2020). The MINERD manages all public school services including food, infrastructure and staff payroll. In addition, the MINERD is responsible for transferring funds to schools to cover minor operations. For private schools, the MINERD evaluates the minimum achievement standards. Only private schools that pass the minimum standard assessments are recognized by the MINERD.⁵

Table 3. Types of schools

Type of school	Description	Schools	Enrollment (%)
Public	Offer free teaching services to the population and finance their operations through public funds.	7,440	74.5%
Private	Offer teaching services in exchange for a fee that are paid by students and their families.	3,636	23.8%
Semi-Official	Offer free or low-cost educational services with financial support from the public sector. Private institutions, usually affiliated with a religious or non-profit institution.	196	1.7%

Source: Authors with data from MINERD 2020

³ The education subsystem for young people and adults receives young people, from the age of 14 and above, who cannot attend on regular hours, with an adapted curriculum, at more flexible times (night and partially in-person).

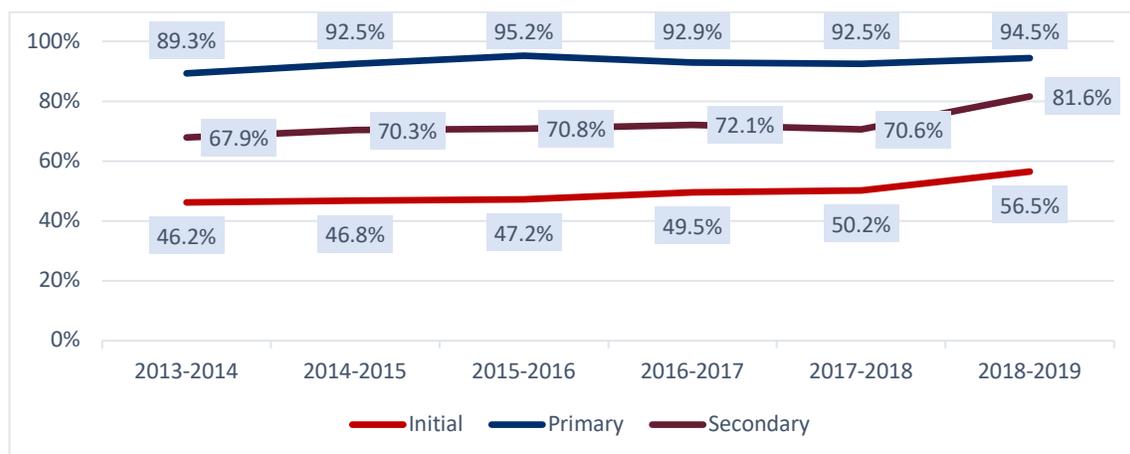
⁴ For the 2018 – 2019 school year, the education subsystem for young people and adults received 9.5% of the total number of students enrolled in the system.

⁵ In practice, a proportion of 56.5% of all private schools operating in the country do so without MINERD's recognition, which means that they do not have the minimum standards to operate. (MINERD, 2020).

a. Access to Education

In 2019, the country's education system had almost universal coverage, with 95% net coverage for the primary level. However, the system remains behind in access to the initial and secondary levels, with net coverage rates of 57% and 82%, respectively.

Chart 4. Dominican Republic. Net Coverage Rate, by Education Level. 2013 – 2019



Source: Elaboration by authors based on MINERD statistical indicator bulletins 2014 – 2020

By 2020, almost half a million school-age children and adolescents do not attend school and nearly half of them are at the initial level. On the reasons for not attending school, students and/or family members report that: they did not want to study/disliked studying (20.08%), family reasons (10.25%), work does not allow it (8.12%) and that the child did not have identification documents to enroll in school (5.31%). Four out of 10 adolescents and children, and their families, say that even if they are not studying, they hope to do so again (IDEC, 2020).

Table 4. School Attendance

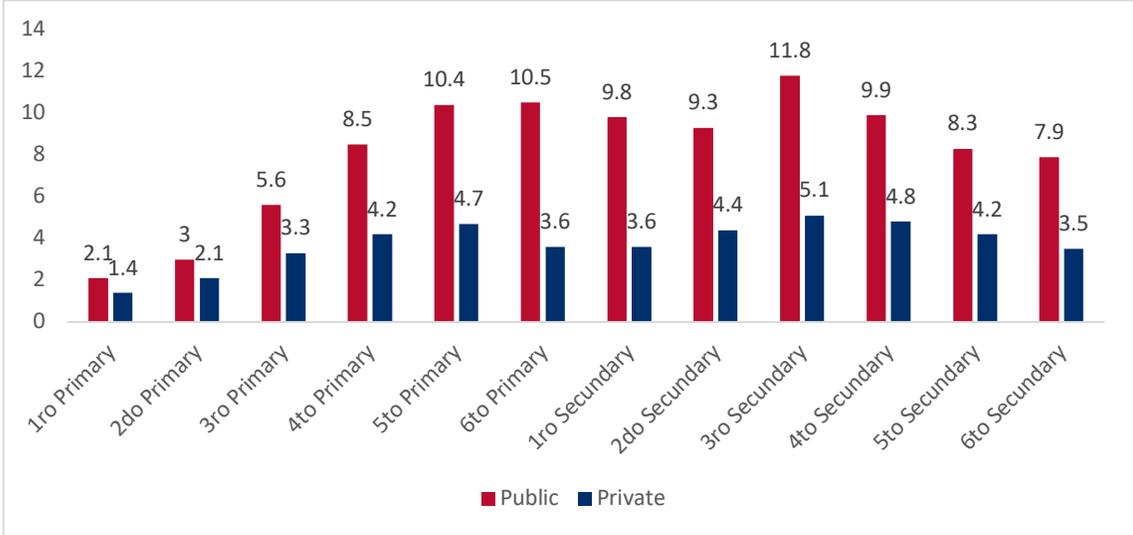
Age Groups	Estimated Population, 2017	School Population, 2017-2018	Population Not in School, 2017-2018	Non-Attendance Rate, 2017-2018
3 to 4	387,390	136,720	250,670	64.7%
5	194,189	170,164	24,025	12.4%
6 to 11	1,160,293	1,091,526	68,767	5.9%
12 to 14	582,120	527,266	54,854	9.4%
15 to 17	574,659	489,883	84,776	14.8%
Total	2,898,651	2,415,559	483,092	16.7%

Source: Taken from IDEC (2020).

b. Education Quality and Efficiency

Failing grades and being older than the corresponding age established by MINERD for their grade (over-age) are the main risk factors for school dropout. Male students in the public sector are often identified as the main subjects of these characteristics. According to local studies, a student who is over-age is 6.3 times more likely to drop out of school in the eighth grade than one who is pursuing a degree with their corresponding age group (Cooper, Morales & Mones, 2015).

Chart 5. Over-Age by Grade and Sector School Year 2018 – 2019⁶



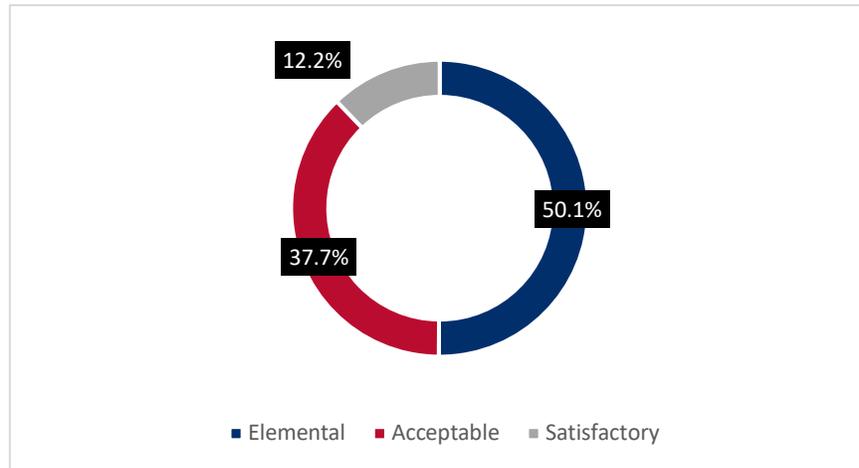
Source: Authors using data from IDEC (2020).

Additionally, more than half of the initial level educational supply in the country is private, and since not all families can afford tuition, a significant proportion of students enter the first grade without having gone through the initial (pre-primary) level grades. The country also has an "automatic promotion" policy, which prevents students from failing in the first three grades of the primary level. The policy might lead to further repetition of the shortcomings lingering from previous years.

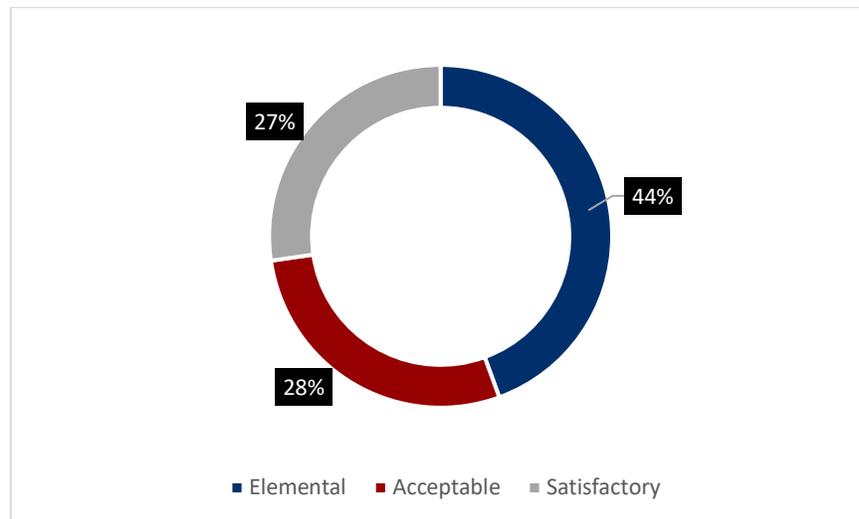
The results of the Diagnostic Tests to third graders in 2017 reflect the **quality** of education. A considerable proportion of students conclude the first primary school cycle without mastering the basic skills of literacy and mathematics, with 50.1% of them only reaching the elemental achievement level in the test and 44% achieved the same level in mathematics.

⁶ Semi-official schools are considered public for these official statistics.

Chart 5. Student Distribution Based on Results in Third Grade Diagnostic Tests 2017 (Literacy and Mathematics)



Results in Literacy



Results in Mathematics

Source: MINERD, 2018

These results are consistent with UNESCO's learning tests in Latin America for the third and sixth grades (TERCE, Spanish acronym). In these, the Dominican Republic, at the public and private level, achieved results below the regional average, while literacy scores for third and sixth graders were the lowest of all countries included in the exam over the last two administrations of the test and has been described as the "Achilles heel of the Dominican education system." (Lisman, 2019a).

Table 6. TERCE Results for Third and Sixth Grade, by Subject and Country

<i>Average TERCE score</i>				
	Third Grade		Sixth Grade	
Country	Reading	Mathematics	Reading	Mathematics
Chile	582.44	571.28	557.01	580.51
Costa Rica	557.52	542.83	545.5	535.19
Uruguay	550.55	524.17	531.79	566.57
México	549.26	519.39	528.77	565.77
Brazil	539.54	519.33	525.57	514.69
Argentina	533.26	512.48	523.93	519.63
Perú	532.74	521.39	508.58	530.23
Ecuador	524.17	508.43	505.44	527.25
Colombia	518.88	519.1	490.7	513.12
Honduras	507.52	496.81	489.03	487.98
Guatemala	500.69	494.86	482.63	461.48
Panamá	494.15	489.93	479.19	479.79
Paraguay	487.84	480.94	478.96	462.31
Nicaragua	484.7	478.01	469.14	455.55
Dominican Republic	454.03	448.03	455.94	436.85

Source: UNESCO, 2016

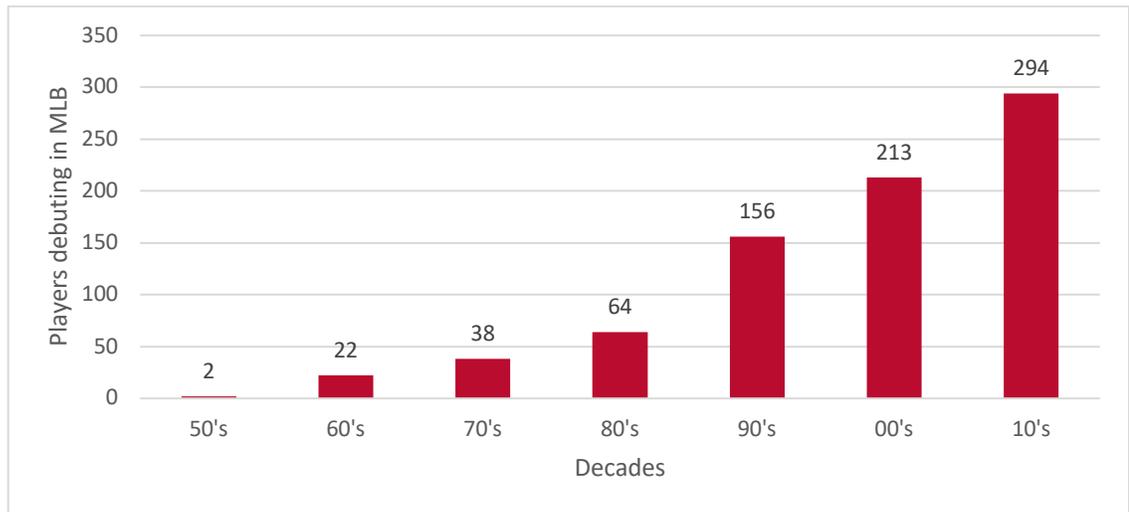
CHAPTER 3. BASEBALL TRAINING INDUSTRY

3.1 Origins and Operation of the Informal Training Industry

Over the years, Dominican players, such as the Alou brothers, Juan Marichal and Julian Javier, have made their way into the American professional baseball league with success stories, inspiring young people to achieve the dream of reaching the MLB. This is how professional baseball teams began to consider Dominican players as viable investments.

Initially, those connecting local prospects with MLB professional teams were retired Dominican players who became recruiters and assumed the role of intermediaries between young prospects and major league teams (Ruck, 1991). The rise of Dominican prospects in the MLB has been progressive, and there are currently thousands who aspire to become professional players and to sign a contract with an MLB team.

Chart 7. Number of Dominican Players Debuting in Major League Baseball



Source: Authors using MLB-Almanac

In 1985, the Dominican Summer League (DSL), affiliated with the United States Minor Baseball League (MiLB), was founded in partnership with MLB professional teams. This league served as a platform for local players and contributed to the evolution of the system of hiring young prospects in the country. At about the same time, under the leadership of scout Rafael Avila, Campo Las Palmas (1987) was built and teams from the MLB began to install formal academies in the country.

As of 2000, with the establishment of MLB's Baseball Operations office in the country, investment in the development of the industry increased. Currently, all MLB professional teams have at least one affiliated team in the DSL, which compete each year. Each team in the league has academies in Boca Chica, Santo Domingo Norte, San Pedro de Macorís and San Cristóbal.

Players from the DSL teams are recruited from the local informal training industry. The industry operates with a "feeding system" where players move through different training programs in the informal sector until they get to sign a contract with a major league organization to play in the MiLB. This "feeder system" has distinct layers whereby prospects with high potential are passed onto programs with experience and reputations for signing players, in exchange for a percentage of a possible signing bonus.

From there, successful prospects advance to the minor leagues and major leagues in the United States. The dynamics of the informal training industry are at the center of this study and, in particular, its potential effects on the educational opportunities and outcomes of the young prospects involved (Lisman, 2019b).

3.2 The Informal Prospect Training Industry

The sharp increase in the salaries and signing bonuses of Dominican players in the MLB has significantly impacted the Dominican local culture. For instance, in 1956, Felipe Alou signed a bonus of approximately USD\$ 2,000.00, calculated in present-day dollars, while players today receive amounts that can exceed USD\$ 1,000,000.00.

Each year over 3,000 prospects register to be eligible to sign a contract with a MiLB team, of which approximately 3% reach this goal. However, only a minimum percentage of those who get a contract get to play in the MLB; and the rest are released in the process before achieving the chance to play in the MLB. This does not include similarly aged participants who have already quit the training program before reaching this point in time.

The minimum wage for a major league player (40-man roster) is \$563,500 per year; in the minor leagues it ranges from \$1,600 per month (Rookie League) to \$2,800 (Triple A), during the five months they play. For Dominican players who do not reach the major leagues, their income is limited to their signing bonus, minor league salaries and, in some cases, income from participation in professional leagues outside of the United States. In addition to financial incentives, the prospects who reach the major leagues become respected figures by their communities and peers while acquiring international fame in the countries that have a tradition of playing baseball.

These factors (large numbers of applicants, strong financial incentives and social recognition) have created a prolific informal industry that guides parents and trains prospects on their way to obtaining a signing bonus with a team and to become a professional player.

3.3 Stages to Become a Professional Player

Dominican prospects usually go through five stages before they manage to play professionally. A considerable proportion of players leave the process at each stage and only a small group advances to the next.

The informal training industry focuses on the first two stages of training young prospects. Since the industry works without affiliation to any public or private institution, there are no formal documents on its structure. Therefore, the results of interviews and focus groups to key actors (trainers, players and tutors) helped develop a picture of the players' path to becoming professional players. Below is a description of each of these stages.

- **Stage I:** 9 to 12 years old. At this stage, prospects decide whether they will continue with baseball professionally or as a recreational activity. Typically, prospects make this decision at ages 9 or 10 and depending on their physical development.
- **Stage II:** 12 to 16 years old. At this stage, prospects spend more time training and seeking a minor league contract with a professional team (MiLB). As part of the effort to obtain a contract offer, prospects participate in local tournaments and recruiter exhibitions sponsored by their trainers. As previously mentioned, according to MLB regulations, the

prospects are only eligible to receive a contract offer after they have turned 16.5 years old based upon the July 2 date of the year when the prospect turns 17 (modified to January 15 due to the COVID 19 pandemic). However, market experts suggest that professional team recruiters often make verbal (informal) agreements with parents and trainers before the minimum age, involving players as young as 13 years old (Ottenson, 2014; Ruck, 2020).⁷

- **Stage III:** 16 years old and older. This stage represents a first milestone for players: signing a contract with a professional MLB team. With this, players join one of MiLB's local teams in the DSL. The deal includes a signing bonus and a salary approved by the prospective tutors. Each of the teams they can sign with has an academy where approximately 70 players are received each year. Prospects stay in these complexes where they improve their physical skills and techniques while using their spare time to participate in specific training programs. All teams have some educational programs within their academies that prospects can choose from such as English lessons, high school completion, financial literacy, life skills and computer skills. Players stay an average of 2 to 3 years at this stage before advancing, or not, to the next. According to actors consulted for this study, it is common for players who sign a contract to be released after one year at the academies.
- **Stage IV:** Play in the MiLB in the United States: first, in an advanced rookie league, and then move on to Class A short season, Class A, Advanced Class A, AA, and AAA. According to MLB statistics, only 2% of players at this stage end up playing in MLB.

Players that are released at any of the stages after signing a contract can access funds to continue their studies. However, respondents said it is very difficult for prospects to resume their studies as many of them have already assumed family responsibilities or have been estranged from their educational goals for extended periods.

In this sense, it is common for many prospects released in the third and fourth stages to remain in the United States illegally and try to obtain a legal immigration status. Released players surveyed said that often it is their own families who pressure them not to return to the DR, seeing that their income prospects would be more limited. Players who have been fired or “released” often become trainers in the local industry; in fact, most of the trainers interviewed for the purpose of this study were prospects that were released either at Stage Three or Stage Four.

- **Stage V:** Players move on to playing on a professional MLB team in the major leagues.

⁷ 16 years old by September 1 of the year in which the contract is signed.

Table 7. Stages for Professional Players

Stage	Age	Description
I	9 – 12	Initial interest
II	12 – 15	Intensive training and obtaining a contract
III	16+	Lead academy and summer league
IV	17+	MiLB in the United States (Class A, AA, and AAA)
V	21+	Professional MLB player

Source: Authors

3.4 Business and Training Models

Training programs are a semi-structured environment where players receive baseball practice, technical lessons, and other forms of support. Most leagues use public facilities to train prospects and run their operations. The services offered at least two of the following models:

Training Model 1. Train players below 12 years old (Stage I). Trainers offer physical education and baseball classes. Players begin to participate for recreational purposes and, depending on their performance, progressively increase their weekly practice hours.

Training Model 2. Train players from 12 to 16 years old, without accommodations (Stage II). In addition to the training hours described in Model 1, trainers also connect players with professional team recruiters to participate in exhibitions or tryouts and guide them through the process of signing a contract with an MLB team. For this service trainers often bear other costs, such as providing equipment and providing English classes. The education that players receive are usually the responsibility of the prospects' parents.

Training Model 3. Train players from 12 to 16 years old, with accommodations (Stage III). This functions similar to Model 2, but in addition it also provides lodging accommodations, meals, and education to the prospects. Additionally, this system is more intense in terms of schedules and the number of training hours. Prospects under this model may either attend a public school on a 4-hour schedule⁸ or a private educational program with irregular schedules. There is a subgroup of programs under this model that specializes in training prospects during the last 18 months before being eligible for a contract. This subgroup accounts for less than 5% of all the training programs identified for the purpose of this study. These programs are known for having better connections with MLB recruiters.

Training Model 4. Intermediaries (Any Stage). Individuals affiliated (or not) to an informal training league connecting recruiters, leagues and players without necessarily being baseball trainers themselves.

⁸ Several school schedules coexist in the country's public education system (see Chapter 2).

Currently, MLB leads an association of independent trainers in the Dominican Republic, Panama, Venezuela and Colombia called the MLB Trainer Partnership, which supports trainers who meet MLB-approved ethical and health standards. In the country, 30 programs are part of the MLB Trainer Partnership and all offer two or three of the training models listed above. However, most of the programs in the MLB Trainer Partnership focus on the signing process, that is, they receive leads within 18 months of the minimum age required to sign a contract. For example, a 12 year old boy might go from one informal program to another and as he continues to show talent with future promise, will eventually be engaged with a trainer who has the connections with teams to give him a tryout.

In terms of a business model, monetizing their efforts is a challenge for trainers, as most prospects come from low-income environments. To achieve this monetizing goal, they can use different strategies for players within the same league, depending on what they negotiate with their tutors. This research identified two ways in which trainers generate income, which are often combined within the same programs.

Monthly Fee. Trainers charge a flat fee for a specific number of weekly classes. This case is common in leagues that train players under the age of 12.

Percentage of the Signing Bonus. Trainers agree with the prospect and their guardians that if a contract is signed with an MLB team, they will share a specific percentage of their bonus with their trainer. In these agreements, the trainer provides training services without receiving any compensation until the prospects gets a contract. This approach is most common in leagues that train prospects from 12 to 15 years. However, prospects can make arrangements with several coaches, including those who trained them during Stage I (before turning 12 years old). These agreements are a negotiation between prospects' guardians and the trainers, without the participation of the MLB teams.

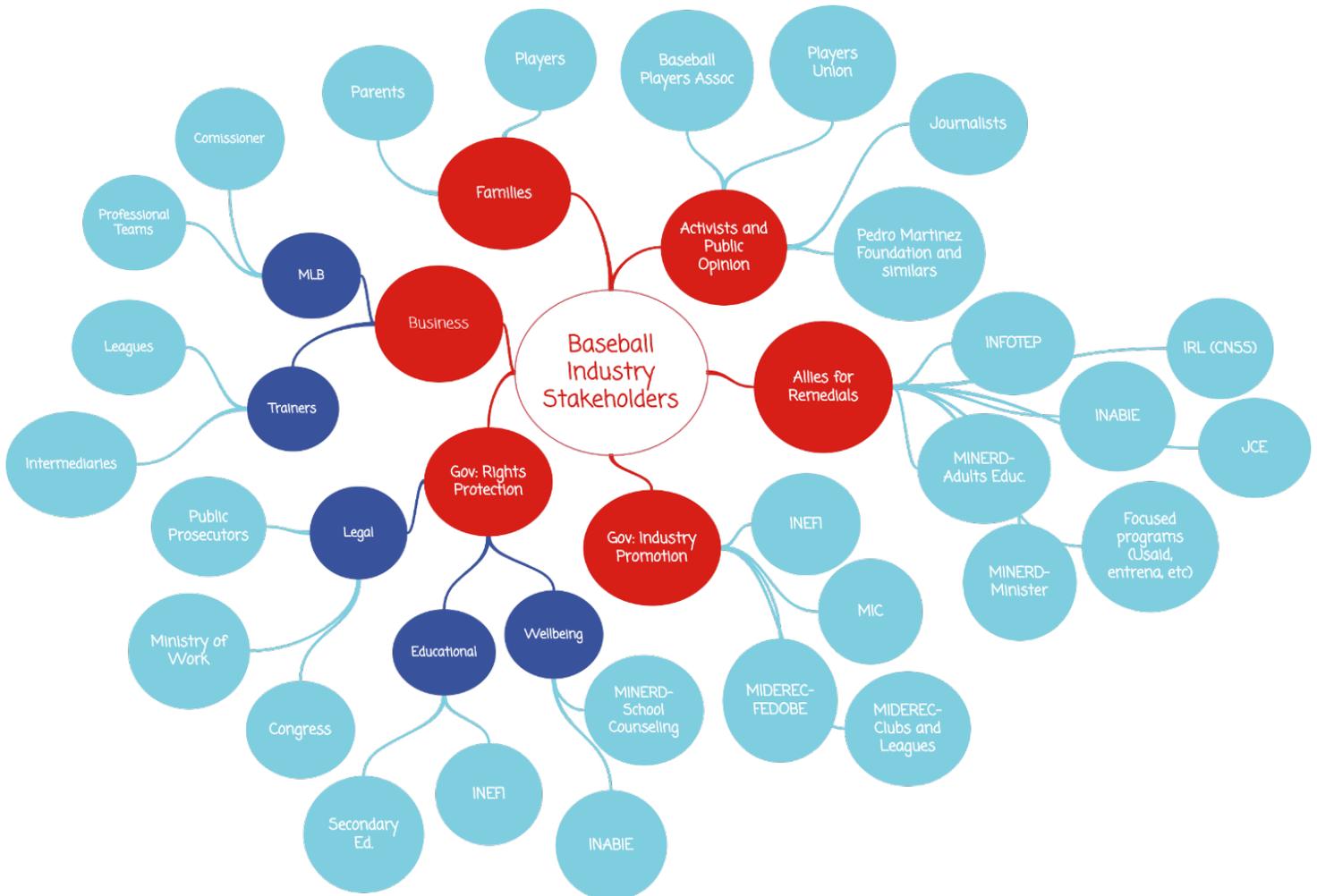
3.5 Key Industry Stakeholders

The informal training industry generates revenue based on the trainers' primary relationships. However, their actions are stimulated by incentives created from outside the industry. This section presents a summary of stakeholders that influence these incentives. Although the list of actors focuses on individuals with direct participation in the industry, it also considers individuals and agencies indirectly involved in terms of incentivizing industry behaviors, or who hold public positions that oversee the training process or regulate youth wellbeing. Chart 8 presents a summary of stakeholders classified into the following six categories:

- **Families.** Parents and prospects who seek training services.
- **Baseball industry.** Informal trainers and MLB (teams and commissioner).
- **Government.** Public institutions responsible for promoting and/or regulating the development of small businesses (such as informal coaching leagues) and institutions responsible for protecting the rights of underage players.
- **Allies seeking solutions.** Institutions or individuals implementing programs to support players and minimize the potential adverse side effects of the training industry.

- **Activists and public opinion.** Journalists and activists who promote the benefits of the industry and denounce its disadvantages.

Chart 8. Key Players in the Industry



Source: Authors based on interviews

3.6 Prospects' Family Context: Household Composition and Parents' Educational Achievement

The demand for educational services depends on individual factors (income level, education performance, religious beliefs, perception of quality of services, etc.) and contextual factors (access to the services, school quality, and the opportunity costs of attending school). The following subsections present how the most important factors affect the educational demand of prospects in the Dominican Republic.

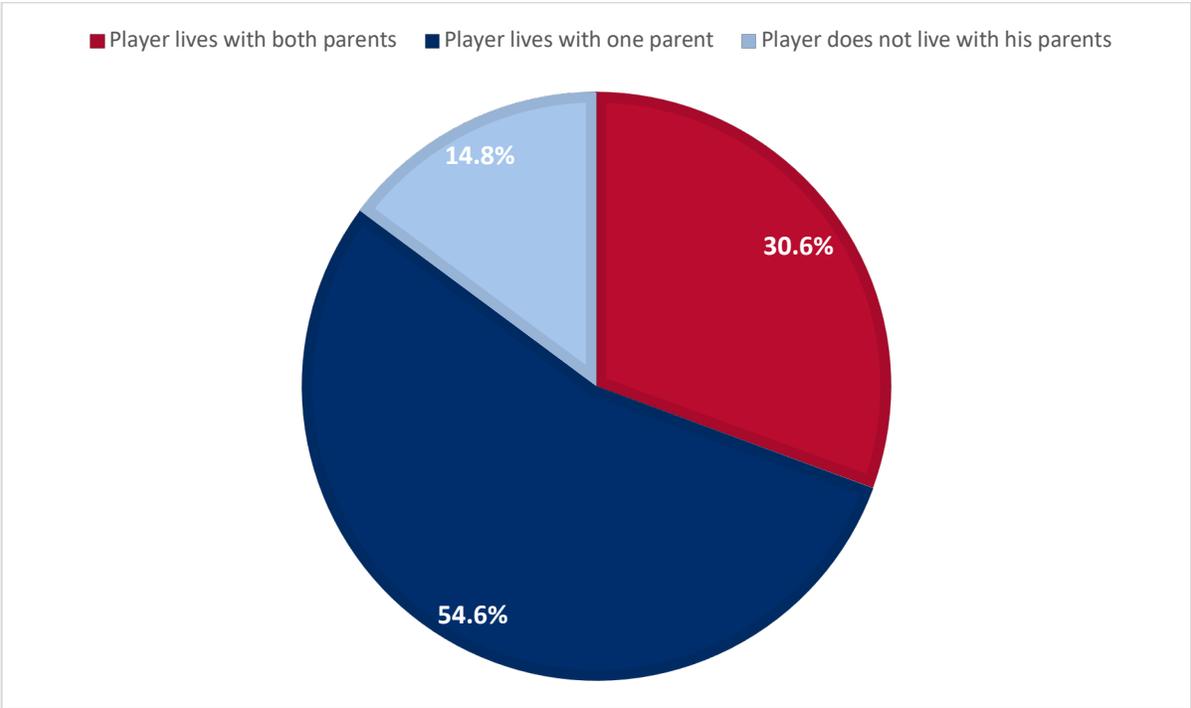
The socio-economic characteristics of students have a direct impact on their commitment to education. Generally, parents' educational level conditions the income level and wealth of students' households, which are important determinants of school retention and performance.

Having lower income levels at home hinder educational and non-educational support for students: e.g., books and supplies, medical care, nutrition, housing quality, etc. (Chevalier et al., 2013); resulting in lower levels of attendance and poor learning outcomes.

Family structure and composition also affect school attendance and outcomes. For example, the presence of younger siblings is linked to non-attendance at school, as students might share caring responsibilities with their parents (Kruger, Soares & Berthelon, 2006). The following sections present data related to prospects' parents' educational level as well as their family structure and composition.

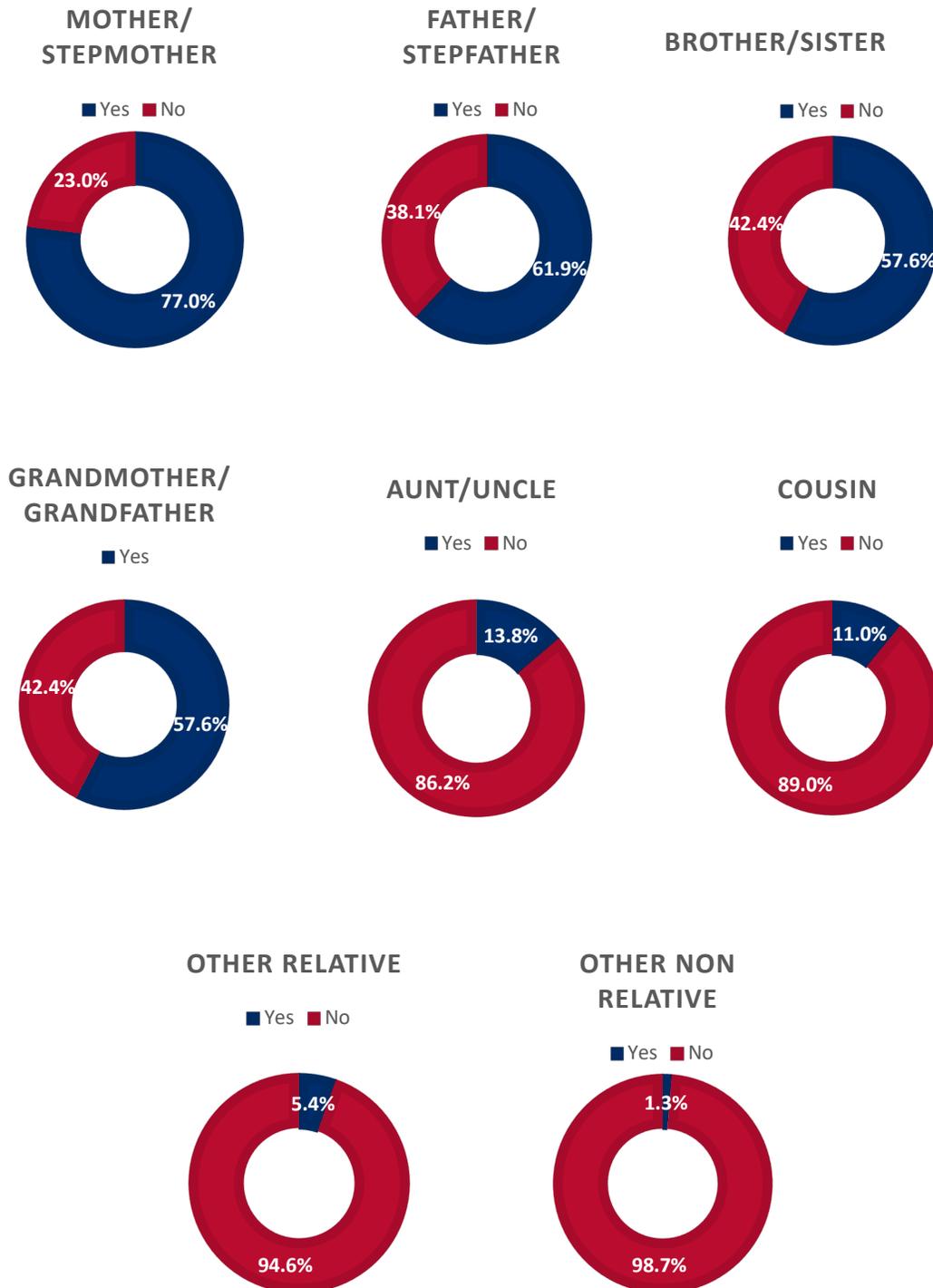
On where and with whom the prospects reside, this study shows that most of them (77%) are originally from urban areas around Greater Santo Domingo, where the minor league academies of major league teams are located. As for family composition, Charts 9 and 10 show a summary from the prospects survey data. Most prospects (54.5%) live with both parents, while 30.6% live with only one parent.

Chart 9. Prospects that Live with Both Parents



Source: Authors using prospects survey data

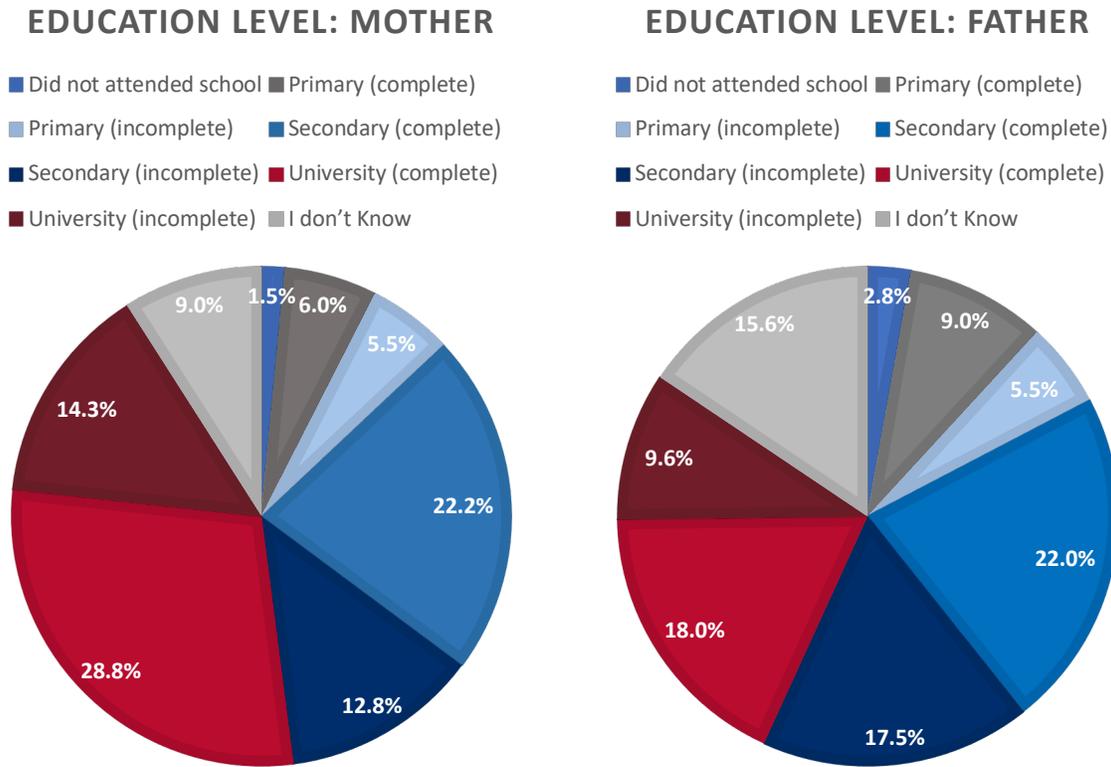
Chart 10. Which people live in your house with you?



Source: Authors using prospects survey data

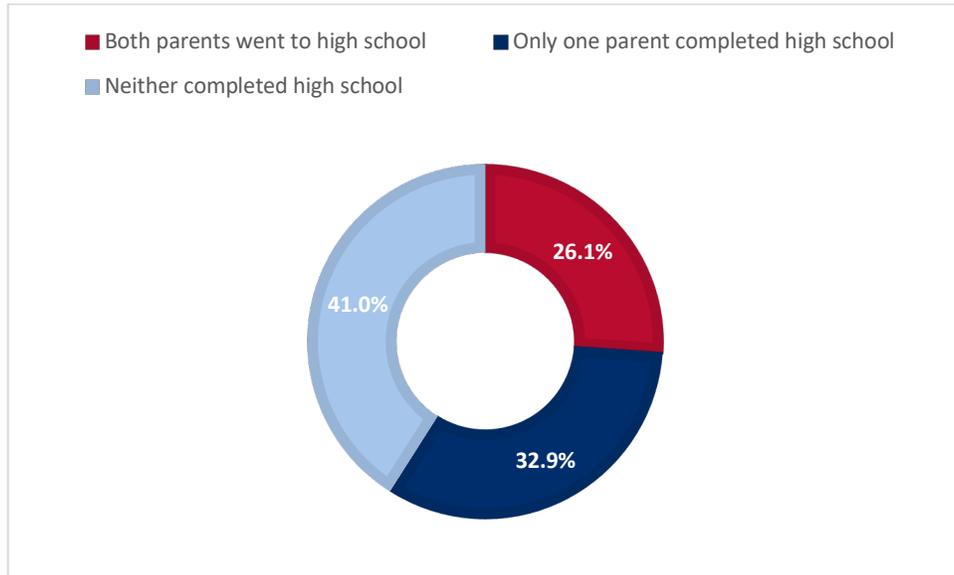
In terms of income, 84.3% of respondents reported to have water service in their home, indicating that they generally do not belong to the lowest income groups of the population. In this regard, trainers who participated in the focus group identified an evolution of the socioeconomic profile of prospects in recent years, seeing that they increasingly come from middle- and lower-middle-class households. However, some prospects reported in focus groups their interest in using their signing bonus to meet family needs: "helping their father or mother," "building a home," or improving the infrastructure of their current homes. As for the level of education achieved by parents, prospects reported similar high school graduation rates for both their parents (22%) with most prospects having neither of their parents completing high school.

Chart 11. Highest Level of Education Achieved by the Prospects' Parents



Source: Authors using prospects survey data

Chart 12. Prospects' Parents that Completed High School



Source: Authors using prospects survey data

CHAPTER 4. EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT OF BASEBALL PROSPECTS

4.1 Educational Context of Prospects

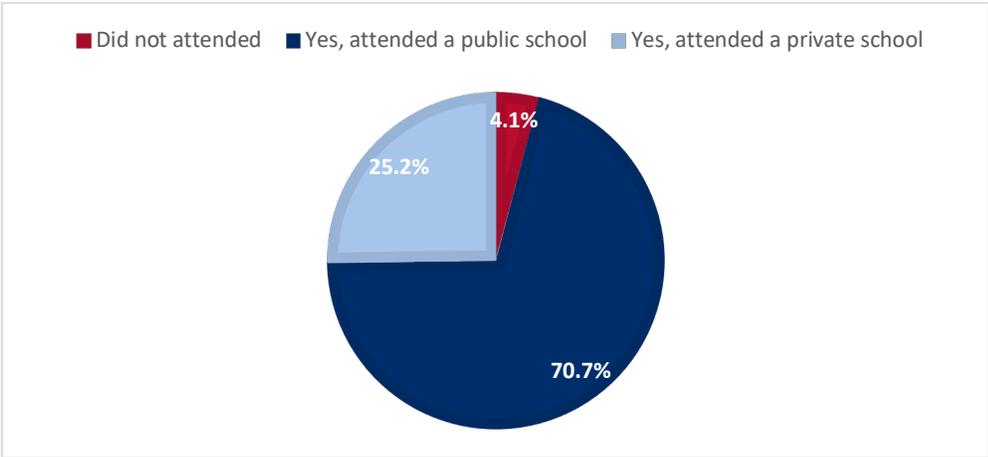
Considering the significant educational challenges that Dominican students face, the study also focused on collecting information about class attendance and their perception on the value of the education they are getting at their schools.

a. Class Attendance

Most of the prospects surveyed attended classes in the 2019 – 2020 school year, with the majority (45%) of them attending the morning schedule. A small proportion of the surveyed prospects attended school in the adult education system, although their average age is only 16 years old. In focus groups, it was noted that prospects closer to the contract eligibility age tend to attend these adult schedules and have enrolled at least the last two academic years in them by the time they sign a contract. Additionally, prospects closer to the signing age sometimes also attend adult-like schedules in the private sector. Although the adult schedules in the private sector also contribute to grade completion and generate an academic record for students, they are often limited in terms of the time they spend in school and studying in general.

Moreover, MINERD authorities identified incidents in which public schools have entered into irregular agreements with training programs. There were cases in which students only attend four hours of classes every 15 days, and other cases where public school teachers travel to training programs irregularly (without MINERD approval).

Chart 13. Class Attendance in School Year 2019 – 2020



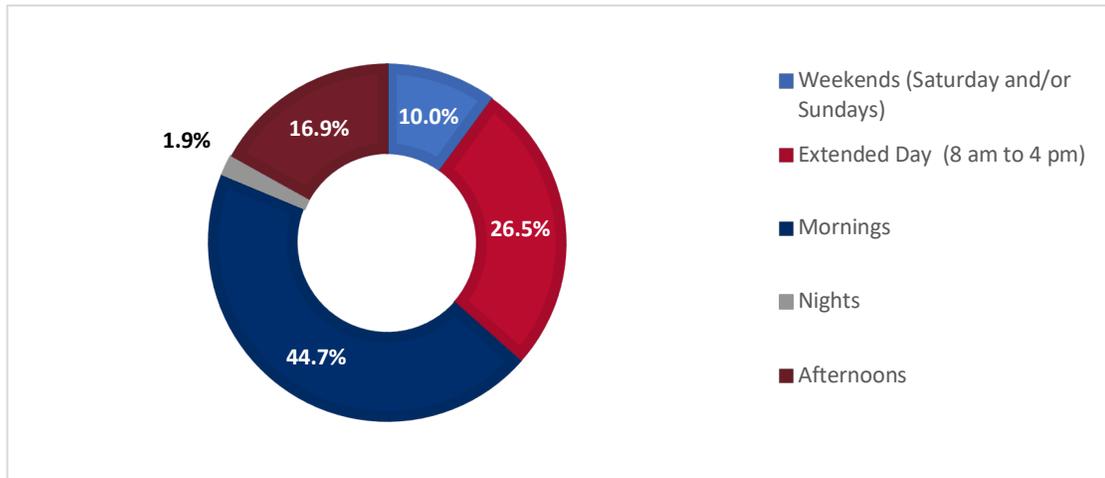
Source: Authors using prospects survey data

Table 8. What schedule did you attend at school last year (or the last year you were enrolled)?

Class Schedule	Frequency	%
Weekends (Saturday and/or Sunday)	53	10%
Extended Day (8:00AM to 4:00PM)	141	27%
Mornings (8:00AM to 12:30PM)	238	45%
Nights (5:00PM to 9:00PM)	10	2%
Afternoon (1:00PM to 5:30PM)	90	17%
Total	532	100%

Source: Authors using prospects survey data

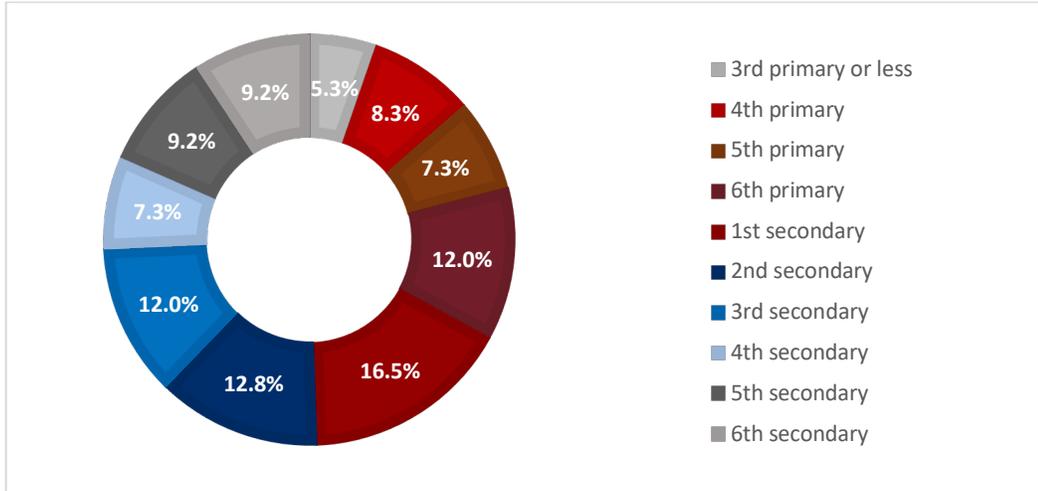
Chart 14. What schedule did you attend at school last year (or the last year you were enrolled)?



Source: Authors using prospects survey data

For the 2019 – 2020 school year, most of the surveyed prospects (54%) attended the sixth grade of primary school, and first, second, and third grades of secondary school. However, it is important to note that when comparing the prospects dates of birth to their grade, 23.7% of them were **older than the corresponding age for the grade they were attending (over-age)**. When analyzing this by school type, 16.0% of prospects attending private schools were over-aged compared to 26.5% of the ones attending public schools.

Chart 15. Degree or Last Grade in the 2019 – 2020 School Year



Source: Authors using prospects survey data

The prospects were also asked about the number of students in their classrooms as it may influence quality of the space and the ability of the teacher to meet individual student needs. Most prospects attend a school that had between 15 and 30 students in the same classroom.

Table 9. How many students were in your class in the last school year that you attended school?

Students per classroom	Frequency	%
Less than 15	72	14%
Between 15 and 30	205	39%
Between 30 and 40	186	35%
More than 40	53	10%
I do not know	16	3%
Total	532	100%

Source: Authors using prospects survey data

b. School Context

In focus groups, prospects also valued the environment of their schools positively and reported feeling at ease with their physical spaces. Most prospects (67%) considered their schools were “Very well kept” and live within a “Less than 10 minutes” walk from school (53%).

Table 10. What are the conditions of the building your school is in?

School Infrastructure	Frequency	%
My school is cared for, but needs minor repairs	150	28%
My school is badly deteriorated/ Needs major repairs	25	5%
My school is very well maintained	357	67%
Total	532	100%

Source: Authors using prospects survey data

Table 11. How long does it take to walk from home to school?

Walking from home to school	Frequency	%
Less than 10 minutes	281	53%
10 to 20 minutes	138	26%
20 to 30 minutes	67	13%
It is very far away (More than 30-minute walk)	46	9%
Total	532	100%

Source: Authors using prospects survey data

As for student-teacher relationships, good relationships tend to prevail, although marginally, there are cases of conflicting relationships especially in the case of students attending schools in greater area of Santo Domingo.

At the same time, prospects reported that schools lack equipment and that sports programs are virtually non-existent, thus professional sports are detached from formal school activity. In fact, prospects considered that playing a sport intensively at school posed a risk to their professional aspirations as a player since they could be injured.

Despite the challenges that COVID-19 has imposed for young people, the majority of prospects (66%) reports interest in continuing their studies virtually, which has allowed greater flexibility to baseball practice hours.

Table 12. Will you attend school in the 2020 – 2021 school year?

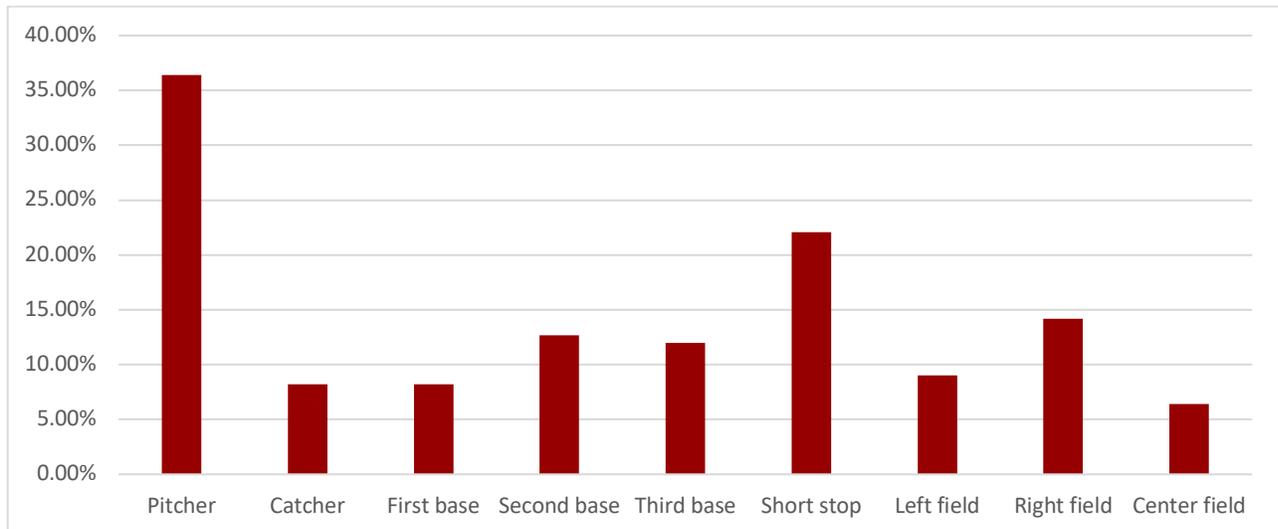
Attending School this Year	Frequency	%
No	36	7%
Yes, to public school	352	66%
Yes, to private school	93	17%
I don't know yet	51	10%
Total	532	100%

Source: Authors using prospects survey data

4.2 Baseball Practices

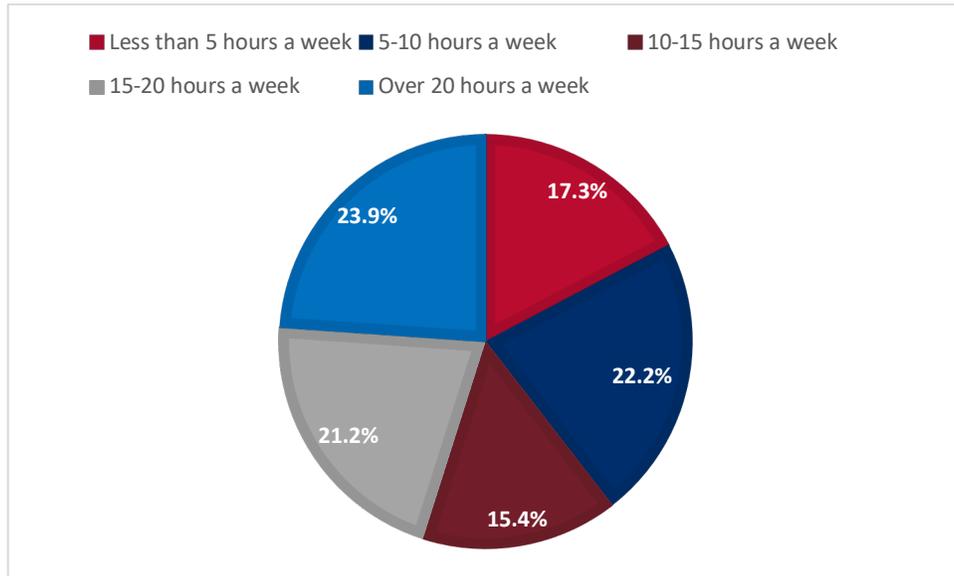
The prospects answered questions qualitatively and quantitatively about their training practices and schedules. Quantitatively, they reported the position that they play most often, total weekly hours dedicated to baseball practice, and schedules, with the following results:

Chart 16. Which or what positions do you play most often?



Source: Authors using prospects survey data

Chart 17. Weekly Hours of Baseball Practice



Source: Authors using prospects survey data

Chart 18. At what time do you practice?

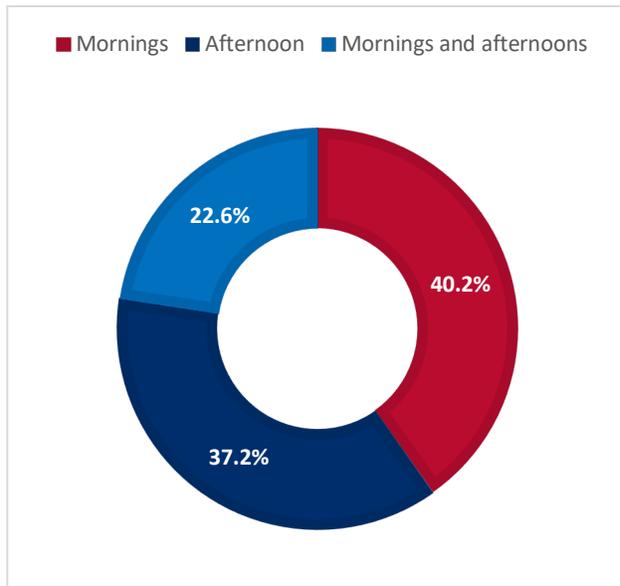
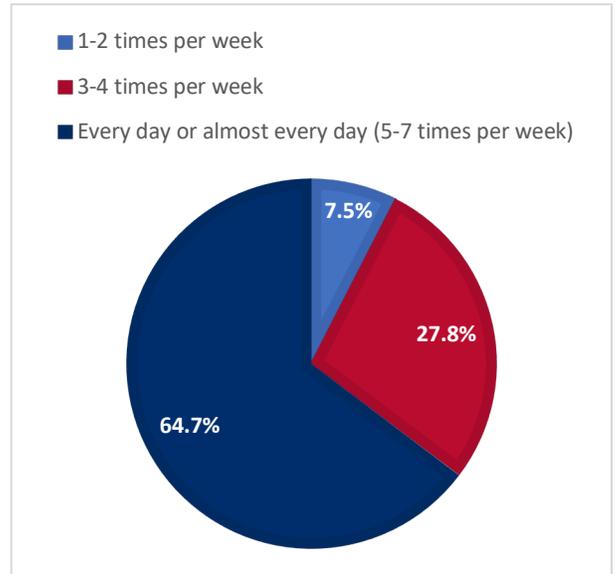


Chart 19. How many times per week do you practice baseball?



Source: Authors using prospects survey data

Qualitatively, prospects reported that they perceived that the leagues reinforce discipline habits through compliance with schedules and training hours, in the case of Stage II players who do not receive accommodations. Meanwhile, prospects who receive accommodations train on average 4 to 5 hours a day, from Monday through Friday, while attending distance learning formats.

This is a worrying situation according to the experts consulted, as the lack of follow-up to these kinds of formats paired with reduced free time often leads to prospects neglecting homework and other assignments.

Conversely, parents who were consulted, expressed feeling "happy" that young people devoted all their free time to baseball, emphasizing that they considered baseball practice to happen in a "healthy" environment, which drives their children away from criminal activities and vices. All parents consulted had agreements with the coach on the percentage of payment they would receive if the prospect signed a contract. They also valued the agreements as "fair", since they did not pay training fees to the league or the trainer.

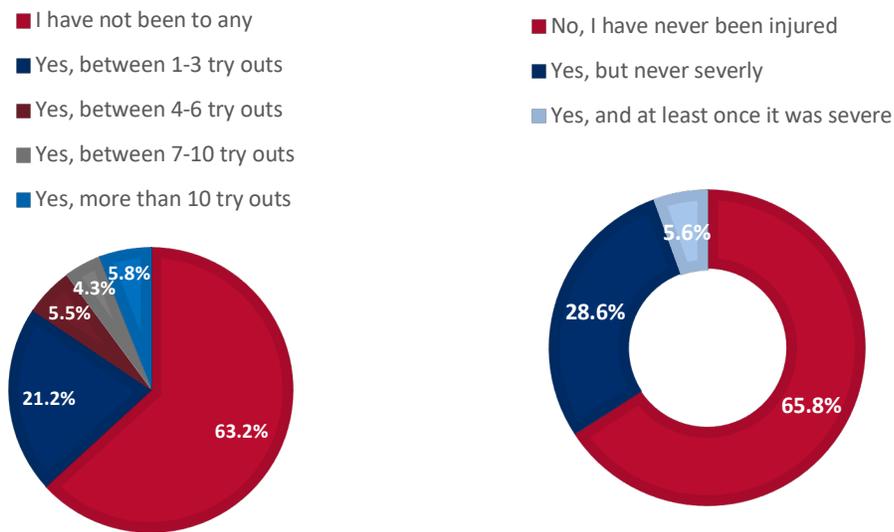
Both parents and prospects themselves hold the trainers in high esteem while expressing admiration for them. In the case of players, they highlighted values of friendship and respect for their coaches as a reliable source of support for stressful moments, such as tryouts or when they suffer injuries.

As for attitudes towards their trainers in the case of prospects receiving accommodations, a sense of gratitude and commitment to their current and former trainer prevails. Neither prospects nor trainers perceive that there is any problem with prospects going into non-regular schedules because they perceive them as equal in quality to regular ones.

Stress at two specific moments was a recurring subject in focus groups. The first related to tryouts, when prospects describe the happiness they experience when they "do well" and the pressure and shame of when they "do poorly." Some players stated that they received a lot of family pressure around the time of the try outs and that their coaches were the ones who accompanied and supported them through that time.

The other moment of stress pointed out by players and coaches is when they turn 17 years old and have not yet received a contract offer and are nowhere near achieving it, as they understand how difficult it is to obtain one after this age. Industry experts emphasized that it is common for these prospects who do not get contracts (the majority) to "become depressed," do not move on to another activity, and continue to go to practice or to the stadium to see other players practice, before dedicating themselves to another economic activity or continuing to study.

Chart 20. Have you ever participated in tryouts? Chart 21. Have you ever been injured?



Source: Authors using prospects survey data

Despite good relationships between trainers and parents, focus groups recognized situations related to the use of controlled substances within the baseball environment. Some parents even shared some personal experiences. For instance, an interviewed mother reported that her child was given a "vitamin" without her consent to which he experienced an "allergic reaction" that hospitalized him for 30 days.

On this issue, experts emphasized that the problem of substance abuse is recurrent in the industry and could be a sign of the desire of parents, players and trainers to endure long and inappropriate training hours for the developing young prospects. In addition, they noted that these cases are never prosecuted in courts, highlighting the vulnerability of the victims and the involvement of the same parents in the issue.

CHAPTER 5. EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS, RISK PREFERENCES AND SCHOOL OUTCOMES

5.1 Educational Expectations

Economic returns influence the resources that families invest in education. Despite the well-studied link between income and educational achievement levels, families' and students' perceived return from education most affects their education investment decisions in short term.

Although the performance perceived by students in developed countries has been studied and is often consistent with reality (educational achievement induces higher incomes) (Rouse, 2004; Betts, 1996) various authors indicate that reality is different for developing countries, where students may have a distorted picture of the real educational returns (Attanasio & Kaufman, 2009; Kaufman, 2008).

Studies on income perceptions assume that in their decision-making process, individuals compare the income they will receive in the future (at some discounting rate) with the educational costs they face in their present. These costs include the direct and indirect costs of attending school, as well as the opportunity cost, which is the measure of the best alternative in which resources, such as time, could be used.

For the Dominican Republic, factors such as poverty, adolescent pregnancy, school coverage and lack of documentation are key in talking about school nonattendance. Guzmán (2009) found another factor: child labor in children from 5 to 18 years old, stressing that it has a direct impact on the quality of education to which students end up choosing. UNICEF (2017) emphasized that 69% of working students are over-aged and most of them attend to "night school" or "weekend school". Although these schedules are endorsed by the MINERD, they are designed for adults. In 2015, 18% of their enrollment in adult programs were children under the age of 17 and 35% were between the age of 19 and 21. In addition, both Guzmán (2009) and UNICEF (2017) report that students over the corresponding age of their grade lose hope in the chances of finishing high school and before leaving it permanently, they try these schedules while transitioning into a full-time job.

5.2 Risk Aversion and Perceived Return on Education

Just as the socioeconomic level of the family conditions students' educational achievement, another determining factor is the risk preference in their educational decisions. At this level, risk aversion is described as the human behavior where people try to reduce uncertainty when faced with an uncertain situation.

Different sociologists have studied the relationship between socioeconomic levels and student career options, proving that people with low-income backgrounds prefer shorter and less risky career paths, as they are unsure on whether they would be able to complete the program (Hartlaub & Schneider, 2012; Boudon, 1974). Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that Dominican students would make decisions based on their own perceptions of return on education and based on how likely it is for them to complete high school or to access higher

education. For baseball players, they would also think of a third factor: how likely it would be for them to be recruited and signed by a professional baseball team. When analyzing the expected value of education, prospects compare it to the expected value of playing baseball. Students with more risk aversion might underestimate their likelihood of graduation and overestimate the probability of being recruited. This could explain the preference for investing more time in baseball training and less in education.

5.3 Baseball Prospects Expectations and Risk Preferences

Most of the players consulted recognized that the lack of education leads to precarious and informal jobs. Likewise, graduating from high school and on to a university levels ranks are within their aspirations and they recognize that it provides certain guarantees and something to be proud of. 92% of prospects reported that if they do not obtain a contract offer, they would resume their studies. When they were asked the same question, but offered other concrete job alternatives, the percentage of prospects who said they would study full-time decreased to 72%.

At the same time, 79% of surveyed prospects reported that their parents want them to go to college or to complete their secondary education (high school diploma). It is important to note that although young people attributed an economic value to education, they were unable to attribute social value to it when questions or scenarios alluding to the social value of education were presented in different ways.

Although students recognize the economic value of education, their use of time suggests other priorities. For instance, school is considered a secondary activity to baseball, or as an alternative plan in case they cannot fulfill their aspirations to play professionally. Qualitatively, prospects reported spending most of their time practicing baseball. Quantitatively, 65% of prospects said they play baseball every day or almost every day, and more than 20% practice baseball more than 20 hours a week. These findings suggest limited time remaining in their schedule to devote to classes or even to other recreational activity.

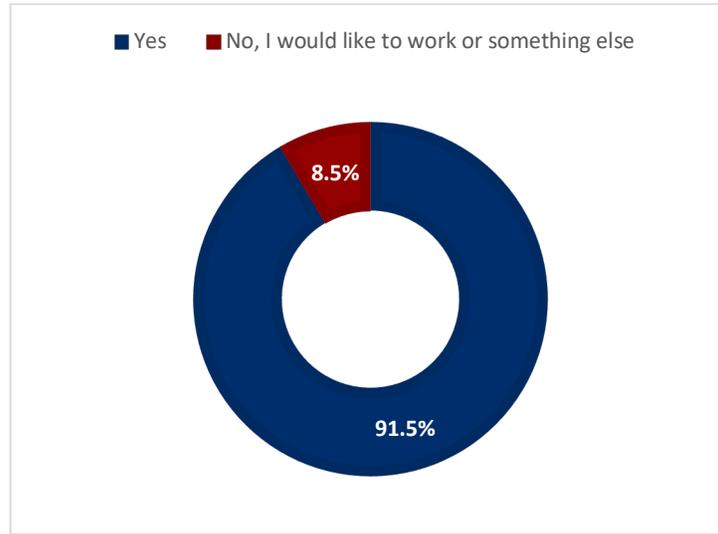
Although young people and parents know the value of education in general, they perceive this path as complex and uncertain for them, which also suggests a marked lack of academic guidance in all interviewed prospects.

Table 15. What would you do if you were not signed?

Options without Signed Contract	Frequency	%
I would get a job	59	11%
I would start a business	26	5%
I would resume my studies full-time	384	72%
I would try to train other young people	53	10%
Other	10	2%
Total	532	100%

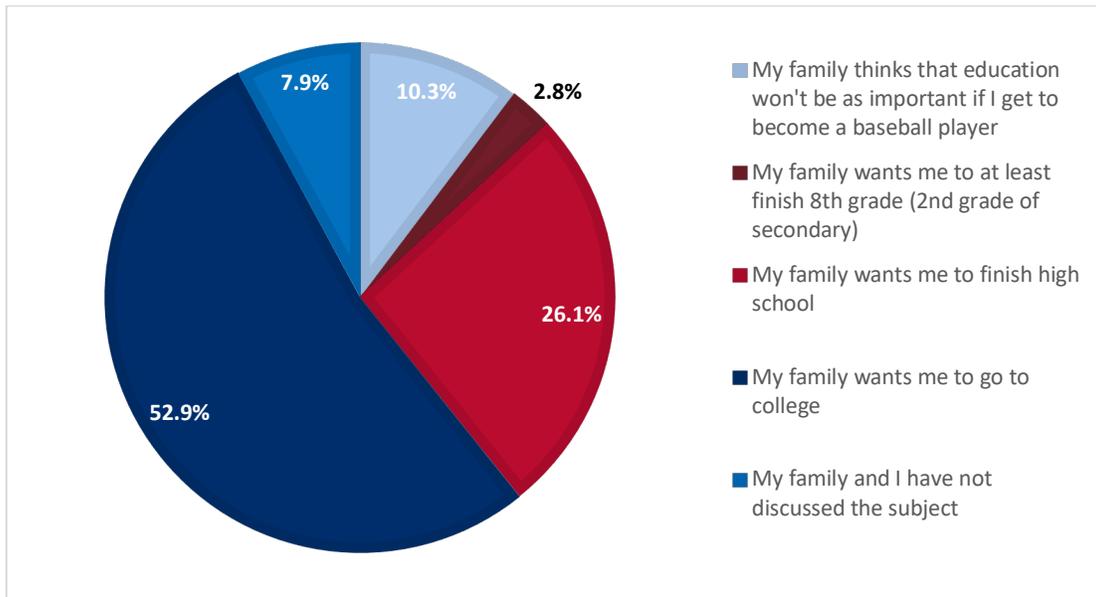
Source: Authors using prospects survey data

Chart 22. If something happens and you do not sign a contract, are you going to go back to full-time studies?



Source: Authors using prospects survey data

Chart 23. Family Educational Expectations



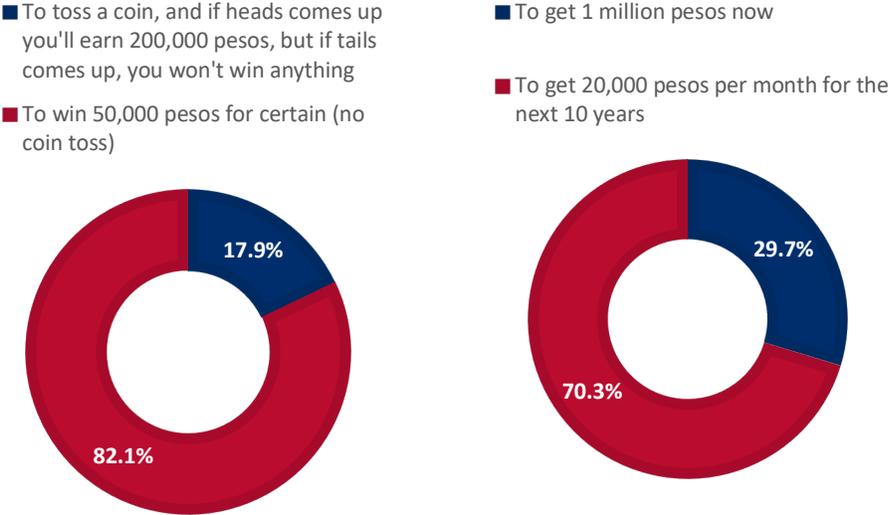
Source: Authors using prospects survey data

According to Belzil & Leonardi, (2013), people with higher risk aversion often prefer degrees that lead to the benefits in smaller timeframes, where there is more certainty. As an effort to explore prospects' **risk aversion**, the questions listed in Charts 24 and Chart 25 were asked. Most prospects opted for the most conservative answers, which may indicate higher risk aversion,

which could explain why they see the school as a secondary path. However, it would not fully explain why baseball practice is perceived as a less risky option.

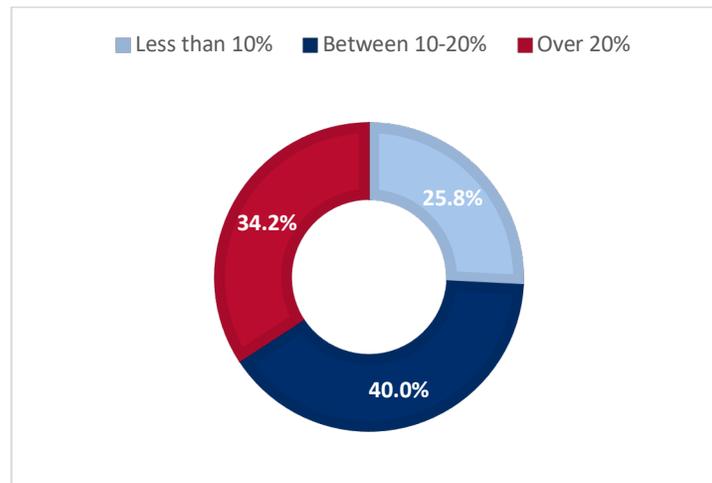
In this regard, the prospects were asked what percentage of their league mates were to be signed and most reported they thought that more than 20% would get a contract. In the context of focus groups, the same question was asked, but with explanations on percentages and additional clarifications, obtaining similar results. For instance, in focus groups they reported that the "possibilities are very low," but when they reported the exact number they believed, it was much higher than the experts estimate. This perception might indicate that prospects do not really know how risky the time investment they are making in baseball is or how safe the investment in education is.

Chart 24. If you were given a choice, what would you prefer?



Source: Authors using prospects survey data

Chart 25. What percentage of your peers you think are going to sign a contract?



Source: Authors using prospects survey data

Table 16. Do you think your classmates will graduate from high school?

Peer Graduation	Frequency	%
Most of them will not graduate from high school	8	2%
Most of them will graduate from high school	294	55%
About half of them will graduate from high school	97	18%
I don't know/I'm not sure	133	25%
Total	532	100%

Source: Authors using prospects survey data

CHAPTER 6. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary of Findings

- Strong interest in baseball and the influence of important sports figures on the youth imagination **are powerful motivators which could be harnessed to improve educational outcomes.**
- Prospects have a positive image of their schools overall, however, **they do not have a positive image of their physical education classes and defined them as very precarious. Highlighting that the schools were poorly equipped. Moreover, prospects lack knowledge of the local organized tournaments in which they might find better conditions.** The expectations of prospects do not match the objectives of the current curriculum of physical education in the country, which seeks to introduce students to specific disciplines, not develop talents.
- The industry trains prospects from an early age, with baseball becoming a **career choice when players are between ages 9 – 12.** The expectation of becoming professional players influences the investment of time that prospects allocate to their studies.
- The **way in which the informal sector operates in the development of young baseball prospects’** is known to school authorities, politicians, coaches, activists and, to a lesser extent, the general public. Efforts have been made from the public sector to address these weaknesses but have not resulted in solutions available to the general population.
- **Public interventions have been insufficient to regulate industry from a children’s rights protection perspective, including education.** Irregularities in the programs they attend, as well as the medical care they receive, are reported in the media on a regular basis, becoming part of the industry's popular culture for decades. However, consulted experts suggest that there are very few or no cases are prosecuted in legal courts.
- **The majority of the surveyed prospects claimed to be enrolled and attend school on a regular basis. They also affirm that they will continue to do so** despite the difficulties of virtual education. Challenges with enrollment and regular attendance occur more frequently in those training programs which house prospects, are close to the signing age, live or will be moving to Santo Domingo and when many have issues of school overage.
- In terms of the quality of education they receive, **neither trainers nor tutors perceive quality differences between regular (traditional) and irregular (flexible or specialized) educational programs.** Experts point to some circumstances in which authorities have intervened in the provision of educational services not accredited or approved by the MINERD.

- **The quality of the Dominican education system is precarious, regardless of the baseball training industry.** Adult schools tend to have even worse outcomes than traditional models. It is not uncommon for youth under the age of 20 to attend the public educational system designed for adults. It is also common for young prospects belonging to programs which include housing to attend adult schools.
- Although the socioeconomic level of young people who play baseball is more diverse than in previous decades, **aspiring players still tend to come from disadvantaged backgrounds with little social and economic capital.** These young people are often more vulnerable to dropping out of school and, later, to struggling in the non-baseball labor market.
- Although this study's sample is not representative at the national level, **the calculated over-aged rate among prospects is considerably higher** than those found at the national level. Qualitatively, almost all young people who participated in the focus groups were over-aged.
- While prospects may or do see education as a requirement to access better jobs and wages in the long run, they still however devote most of their time and energy to practicing baseball. In addition, **prospects have poor knowledge of the educational alternatives available to them** after high school completion besides four-year educational programs.
- **There is a strong interest in gaining a degree over improved learning.** Amongst both prospects and tutors, the “signaling” value of education is much higher than the perceived value of quality of learning. Both prospects and tutors do not perceive it as a problem in substituting regular school with irregular or adult educational programs, as long as they can continue on the path towards a baseball contract.
- **Prospects may be overestimating their actual chances of accessing a signing bonus.** Most of the prospects consulted reported that their chances of being signed were between 10 and 20%, which is much higher than the more realistic percentage of 3 to 5% that industry experts estimate.
- **Tutors and prospects expressed respect and admiration for their trainers, and that they are sources of support in times of stress.** Despite the long odds they face and the difficult circumstances they may confront, most of those surveyed feel that the arrangements with their trainers are fair and supportive. This differs from the popular conception of the ruthless “buscones” taking advantage of their young charges. Nonetheless, negotiations involving minors, often years before the signing age, are not consistently regulated or supervised by any public actor and remain fraught with possible conflicts of interest, gray legal relationships, and non-standardized contracting practices.

6.2 Recommendations

The following eight recommendations are based upon the multiple findings of this assessment. All sectors of the Dominican Republic (government, private enterprise, civil society) can contribute to these recommendations and many of these stakeholders are listed in the section Key Industry Stakeholders in Chapter 3. The leadership and engagement of the informal training sector is crucial in these recommendations to continue to develop baseball stars and improving education at the same time.

Recommendation 1 – Create a model school integrating baseball and academics where prospects continue with their baseball career and receive top quality instruction at the same time. Key factors are:

- Follow models similar to “Magnet Schools” in the US, be under the supervision of MINERD but administrated autonomously with participation of independent trainers. This model could develop ties with junior colleges and four year universities in the US making them places where these US institutions could go to recruit ballplayers who can handle the academics. The Latin Athletes Education Fund started in 1981 provides a model that could be replicated.
- The young prospect completes his education if not signed and if signed, enters into a contract with the correct age for his grade level which would increase probability of high school completion within the MLB team
- The school can be financed by the government and private investors under the current DR Public-Private Partnership legislation, can be for profit or nonprofit.

Recommendation 2 – Integrate baseball part of the physical education curriculum of public schools and have local and regional tournaments. Key factors are:

- Children at an early age have the opportunity to play baseball within a supervised school setting from a young age.
- If they have the talent and desire to be signed, the option is there; if they don’t, the completion of their education is not compromised.
- Financing would be through the MINERD, private sector, and specialized programs from MLB such as the Baseball Tomorrow Fund. MLB can also provide technical oversight through the RBI program.

Recommendation 3 – Provide additional counseling to prospects on life plans and the time investment in baseball versus attending school. Key factors are:

- Adolescents would be able to access professional guidance regarding decisions to continue their baseball career and the trade off with their education. Having someone they can trust within the school system helps them to outline their future.
- This new counseling should be organized and supervised by MINERD.
- Counseling services should be extended to families to eliminate gaps and pressures of expectations between parents and their son(s).

Recommendation 4 – Raise the awareness of the real odds of signing a contract since most prospects overestimate their chances of signing a contract. Key factors are:

- Create a national campaign about the real odds of signing a professional contract without discouraging baseball as a healthy recreational activity.
- This should be a positive message that there is no failure in not being signed and success in life can be achieved in many ways.
- Determine based upon evidence what constitutes the concept of real odds of signing a professional contract. This should be based upon the real numbers of signings per year versus the selected target population of prospects in the system competing to be signed. Percentages used in this report are based upon estimates from both the informal and formal training sectors.

Recommendation 5 – Training programs for parents of young prospects. Key factors are:

- Parents need tools to better support the balance between their child’s quest for a professional contract, the reality of the odds of signing, and that simply being enrolled in school is not enough.
- Implement through MINERD orientation services for parents to help develop contingency plans in the absence of a baseball career.

Recommendation 6 – The informal training sector for baseball prospects should take advantage of evidence based specialized educational programs that could be integrated with the baseball training component. These programs integrate academic, life skills, and socialization skills, accelerate learning, and makes learning fun and engaging for young prospects. Key factors are:

- These programs can fill the gap between the time allotment for formal school time and time committed to baseball and give the tools for the young prospect so he does not fall behind in studies; they also solve the challenge of overage.
- They can be adapted to the schedule of training programs regardless if residential or without housing.
- Examples from US Government supported activities through USAID are Alerta Joven, Baseball Cares, and LEER and included the school retention and re-insertion model called Espacios para Crecer (EpC), employability programs for older prospects never signed and never returning to school, Young Authors club for reading, and youth multiplier groups to reduce bullying. Other donor programs include Deportes para la Vida and the NEO (New Employment Opportunities).

Recommendation 7 – Channel the support and respect that parents and prospects have for their trainers into improved educational outcomes through micro-subsidies. Key factors are:

- Trainers can be an important part of the solution of the educational challenges facing their prospects if provided the correct support.
- Small grants to independent trainers provide them with the necessary cash flow to enhance educational opportunities for their prospects in connection with specialized MINERD services or implementation of evidence based specialized educational programs.

- Additional stimulation could come from rewarding those independent trainer programs whose players achieve the top test score averages each year. This could be expanded to incentivize young prospects attending school and performing well. Private sector companies could become engaged through donations of laptops and other educational support as part of their corporate social responsibility outreach.

Recommendation 8 – Create a national public campaign to protect and improve the conditions of children, adolescents, and youth in sports. Key factors are:

- The large number of success stories of Dominican professional baseball players makes it difficult for the population to understand how the system can negatively affect young people.
- This campaign should support the promotion of the sport in healthy contexts, family supervision of environments, and prioritize the completion of studies.

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ANNEXES

Annex I. Key Identified Actors

As a first approach to the independent training industry, individual actors, groups and organizations that have interests or roles in it were identified. These were grouped into six categories defined below, as well as their linkage to the industry.

<p>Families – Prospects and their parents and/or guardians, who are the users of the services offered in the informal industry.</p> <p><i>Players:</i> Young people involved in training programs at any of the pre-identified development stages.</p> <p><i>Parents:</i> The legal guardians of the minors involved. These are the ones that make verbal agreements on behalf of young people, and at the same time play a decisive role in their educational decisions.</p>
<p>Business – Actors involved at some stage of the prospect development process either before or after signing.</p> <p><u>Independent Coaches</u> <i>Independent leagues and programs:</i> Individuals or groups of people offering training and/or representation services to prospects in all stages prior to signing a contract.</p> <p><i>MLB trainers’ program:</i> Association of independent trainers that receives technical support from MLB.</p> <p><i>Intermediaries:</i> People who connect coaches and prospects at the national level, but do not necessarily offer services directly.</p> <p><u>MLB</u> <i>Professional Teams:</i> MLB teams that recruit prospects in the local industry for the purpose of developing them and advancing to play in the U.S. minor leagues.</p> <p><u>Baseball Commissioner's Office</u> An office attached to the Ministry of Sports, whose incumbent is appointed by the President, and which also aims to promote and strengthen the practice of professional baseball in the country. The Commissioner's Office could be a strategic ally to link other actors around specific initiatives. These actors may or not be governmental.</p>
<p>Activists and Public Opinion – Groups of people organized or not, which contribute to generating public opinion that contributes to improving social recognition of the problems faced by prospects.</p> <p><i>MLBPA:</i> The prevailing market incentives are determined by current regulations for international recruitment of prospects. The MLB Players' association has a role in negotiating the terms that apply for recruitment with MLB teams.</p> <p><i>Dominican Players’ Union:</i> The local players association have a better understanding of the challenges faced by prospects in the local training industry. In this sense, they have a privileged position to advocate for the rights of prospects in the industry.</p> <p><i>Journalists/Press:</i> National and American sports commentators frequently publish stories related to rights violations suffered by Dominican prospects in the informal industry. These stories serve to generate public opinion and call for intervention by the relevant authorities.</p> <p><i>Pedro Martínez Foundation and similar foundations:</i> Currently, there are foundations in the country that do work of representation and activism for the rights of prospects. Among these, the Pedro Martínez Foundation is highlighted, which, among other initiatives, is currently promoting the creation of a school specialized in sports.</p>
<p>Potential Partners for Improvements – Public institutions and non-profit associations that could help counter the adverse situations faced by prospects in the industry.</p> <p><i>INFOTEP:</i> The Institute of Professional Technical Training (INFOTEP), is a public institution that offers vocational technical education services for free. Young "released" youth could benefit from short-term vocational training programs that capitalize on the knowledge that prospects have gained in their training years.</p> <p><i>Minister of Education:</i> The Minister of Education could make initiatives feasible from the public education sector, especially those of greater size that would involve infrastructure investments.</p> <p><i>IRL (CNSS):</i> The National Social Security Council is the governing and superior body of the Dominican Social Security System (SDSS), aims to ensure social, solidarity, sufficient and timely protection against the risks of old age, disability, survival, illness, childhood maternity and occupational risks. A high proportion of young people in the age range do not have health insurance and are exposed to high risks of injury and use of prohibited substances to improve performance. The CNSS could create specific programs for this population.</p>

INABIE: The National Institute of Student Welfare (INABIE) is the decentralized institute of the Ministry of Education responsible for addressing school vulnerability, and counteracting situations of risk of dropout. It has experience implementing projects to care for vulnerable populations.

MINERD- Educ. Adults: The Adult Education Directorate of the Ministry of Education (MINERD) administers education modalities for young adults. These schedules are most often attended by prospects in programs with housing accommodations. This office could be a strategic ally within the MINERD to implement specific programs for this population.

ASFL Remedial Programs: Organizations that have experience working with youth-like populations and have implemented successful solutions in the past. They could administer grant programs, offer training, and promote strategic messages, among other remedial initiatives.

BHD León: This is MLB's official financial institution in the Dominican Republic and has financial training programs for prospects receiving signing contracts. They could be a strategic ally for conceptualizing remedial programs for young people who have been "released".

Government: Industrial Promotion – Public institutions that are usually dedicated to the promotion of baseball in a specific way or school sport in a general way and that could strengthen the industry. This, with a view to strengthening the industry and promoting the positive aspects therein.

INEFI: The National Institute of Physical Education (INEFI) is the institute attached to the Ministry of Education responsible for the training of physical education teachers. INEFI can play an important role in training informal coaches.

MIC: The Ministry of Industry and Trade (MIC) in its vice-ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), has the role of promoting the development and formalization of SMEs. If prospect training programs are conceived as SMEs, it would be important to bring them closer to the assistance services offered in this ministry and that it could improve training services and their adherence to current regulations.

MIDEREC-FEDOBE: The Dominican Baseball Federation (FEDOBE) of the Ministry of Sports and Recreation (MIDEREC) actively organizes and promotes amateur baseball in the country. FEDOBE organizes children's and youth sports leagues nationwide.

MIDEREC-Clubs and Leagues: The management of clubs and leagues of the Ministry of Sports and Recreation promotes recreational spaces in communities. This management has the potential to support the promotion of school sports from its platforms.

Government: Protection of Rights – Public institutions that have within their responsibilities to protect the rights of young people in different aspects.

Welfare

MINERD-School Guidance: The School Guidance Directorate of the Ministry of Education is responsible for administering counseling and psychological support services in public schools. This direction can support the implementation of desertion prevention processes from school, as it has implemented on past occasions.

CONANI: The National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI) is responsible for ensuring compliance with the child code at the national level and promoting the protection of the rights of young people. This agency could defend the protection of minors in future sports laws.

Educational

INEFI: The National Institute of Physical Education (INEFI) can implement programs in conjunction with MINERD to improve the quality of school sports at the national level, supporting its regulation and setting of standards for high-performance athletes. This would help to create a safer environment for the practice of sport.

MINERD- Secondary Education: The Secondary Education Directorate of the Ministry of Education oversees operational aspects of teaching the six grades of the secondary level at the national level. Young prospects in the informal industry, for the most part, are in grades of this level. Management authorities could support campaigns aimed at this audience within the content of the school year.

Legal

Ministry of Labor: One way or another, there is a contractual relationship between minors and coaches. It may be subject to specialized supervision/regulation by the authorities of the Ministry of Labor in such a way as to ensure the protection of the rights of the child and the prevention of child labor.

Office of the Attorney General of the Republic: Despite the prevalence of irregular cases of substance administration in industry, the public prosecutor's office does not process cases systematically. Their participation in the prosecution of irregular cases is necessary to discourage the use of substances appropriately and ensure the enforcement of laws.

Annex II. Instruments

School Prospects Survey for Educational Opportunity Study

Hello! We're collecting information about baseball prospects to study aspects of their lives that allow us to design programs to help them study without having to give up their dream of being a baseball player. Do you agree to help us in our study by answering the following questions?

Please note that:

Questions are anonymous, at no time do we require your name.

If you need help filling out the survey, the pollster will be able to assist you.

1. What year were you born?
2. What country were you born in?
3. What province were you born in?
 - a. Which municipality?
4. What province do you currently live in?
 - a. Which municipality?
5. In which province does your family live most directly (e.g. your parents)?
 - a. Which municipality?
6. How would you classify the area of residence where your most direct family lives (e.g. your parents)?
 - a. Urban
 - b. Rural
7. Which of the following people lived with you between the ages of 0 and 10? (Mark all the people you lived with)
 - a. Mom/Stepmother
 - b. Dad/Stepfather
 - c. Brother or Sister/Sister
 - d. Grandfather and Grandmother
 - e. Uncle and/or Aunt
 - f. Cousin
 - g. Another person in the family
 - h. Another person who is not family
8. In the last year, have you lived with your family? (This refers to the majority of the year.)
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
9. How often do you see or visit your family?
 - a. I see them every day or almost every day
 - b. I see them weekly
 - c. I see them biweekly
 - d. I see them monthly
 - e. I see them in some months and in others I don't
 - f. I never or hardly ever see them
10. Last school year (2019 – 2020), did you attend public or private school?
 - a. Yes, public school
 - b. Yes, private school
 - c. I didn't attend
11. When was the last school year you attended school?
 - a. 2018 – 2019
 - b. 2017 – 2018
 - c. Before that year, which school year? (open response)
12. What schedule were you attending?
 - a. Morning
 - b. Evening
 - c. Night
 - d. Extended Day (8am to 4pm)
 - e. Weekends (Saturday and/or Sunday)
13. Are you planning to attend classes this year? (Presence or virtual)
 - a. Yes, public school
 - b. Yes, private school
 - c. No
 - d. I don't know yet.
14. What was the last grade you completed?
 - a. Below 3rd grade
 - b. 4th grade
 - c. 5th grade

- d. 6th grade
 - e. 1st grade of high school (former 7th grade)
 - f. 2nd grade of high school (former 8th grade)
 - g. 3rd grade of high school (former 1st grade high school)
 - h. 4th grade high school (former 2nd grade high school)
 - i. 5th high school (former 3rd grade high school)
 - j. 6th high school (former 4th grade high school)
15. What is your favorite school subject?
- a. Social sciences
 - b. Natural sciences
 - c. Spanish language
 - d. Mathematics
 - e. Art
 - f. Sport/Physical Education
 - g. Computer science
 - h. English
 - i. Other
 - j. I don't have a favorite subject
16. Do your teammates who play baseball go to primary school or secondary school?
- a. Most of them go to school
 - b. Most of them don't go to school
 - c. About half of them go to school and the other half doesn't go
 - d. I don't know/I'm not sure
17. Do you think your teammates who play baseball are going to finish high school?
- a. Most of them will graduate from high school
 - b. About half will graduate from high school
 - c. Most of them will not graduate from high school
 - d. I don't know/I'm not sure
18. What would you do if after trying to achieve a baseball career, something happens, and you are not signed?
- a. I would resume my studies full-time
 - b. I'd get a job
 - c. I'd start a business
 - d. I'd try to train other young people
 - e. Other
19. How many classmates were in your course in the last year you went to school?
- a. Less than 15
 - b. Between 15 and 30
 - c. Between 30 and 40
 - d. More than 40
 - e. I do not know
20. How would you rate the conditions of the school/school building you attended?
- a. Very well maintained
 - b. Well cared for but needs minor repairs
 - c. Badly deteriorated/ Needs major repairs
21. How long did it take you to walk from home to the school you went to in the last school year you attended?
- a. Less than 10 minutes
 - b. 10 to 20 minutes
 - c. 20 to 30 minutes
 - d. It is very far away (More than 30-minute walk)
22. What was the highest level of education your dad reached?
- a. He didn't go to school
 - b. Primary (incomplete)
 - c. Primary (Complete)
 - d. High School/High School (Incomplete)
 - e. High School/High School (Complete)
 - f. University (Incomplete)
 - g. University (Complete)
 - h. I do not know
23. What was the highest level of education your mom reached?
- a. She didn't go to school
 - b. Primary (Incomplete)
 - c. Primary (Complete)
 - d. High School/High School (Incomplete)
 - e. High School/High School (Complete)
 - f. University (Incomplete)
 - g. University (Complete)

- h. I do not know
24. Did you receive any support from the government to attend school during the last school year you attended? Indicate everything you received. (Check with the pollster if you don't understand this question)
- a. Incentive to School Assistance (ILAE)
 - b. Backpack/school supplies
 - c. School lunch
 - d. Uniforms/shoes
 - e. Some other support
 - f. No support
25. Do you know which of the following subsidies your family receives? Subsidies are grants that the government gives to families as support, often through the solidarity card. (If you don't understand this question, check with the pollster)
- a. *Comer es primero*
 - b. *Bonogas*
 - c. *Bonoluz*
 - d. *Quédate en casa*
 - e. *Pa' ti*
 - f. Incentive to School Assistance (ILAE)
 - g. My family does NOT receive any subsidies
 - h. I'm not sure
26. How do you get the water in the house where your family lives?
- a. From the faucet inside the house
 - b. Outside the house
27. Why did you start practicing baseball?
28. At what age did you first enroll in a league or baseball team?
29. At what age did you enter the league, academy or program you're currently training in?
30. What are the positions you play the most in baseball? (You can select maximum 2)
- a. Pitcher
 - b. Receiver (Catcher)
 - c. First base
 - d. Second base
 - e. Third base
 - f. Short stop
 - g. Left fielder
 - h. Central fielder
 - i. Right fielder
 - j. Designated hitter
31. How many times a week do you practice baseball?
- a. Every or almost every day (5 – 7 times per week)
 - b. 3 – 4 times a week
 - c. 1 – 2 time per week
32. What times do mostly you practice?
- a. In the morning
 - b. In the afternoon
 - c. In the morning and afternoon
33. How many hours do you spend training a week?
- a. More than 20 hours a week
 - b. Between 15 and 20 hours a week
 - c. 10 to 15 hours a week
 - d. Between 5 and 10 hours a week
 - e. Less than 5 hours a week
34. What does your family think about the minimum level of education you should achieve, considering that you're interested in a baseball career?
- a. My family thinks the level of education won't matter if I become a professional player
 - b. My family wants me to finish at least 8th grade
 - c. My family wants me to finish high school
 - d. My family wants me to go to college
 - e. My family and I haven't talked about it
35. If your school became Extended Day next school year (in person), what would you do? (Select the answer that comes closest to what you think.)
- a. I'd stop going to school until I could change schools
 - b. I'd start training on another schedule so I could stay at my school
 - c. I'd stop training until I could change schools
36. Have you participated in "Tests" or "Try Outs" to be seen or evaluated by a major league scout? How many?
- a. I haven't participated.
 - b. Yes, between 1 and 3
 - c. Yes, between 4 and 6

- d. Yes, between 6 and 10
 - e. Yes, in more than 10
37. Have you ever been injured?
- a. No, I've never been injured
 - b. Yes, but never serious
 - c. Yes, and at least once it was a serious injury
38. Near your school or near your home, is there a baseball field available to train or practice baseball consistently? (Select all that apply.)
- a. Yes, near my school or at my school
 - b. Yes, near my house
 - c. There is no place to train near my school, nor in my school, nor near my house
39. Do you sleep on the premises of the academy or program where you train?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Sometimes
40. What percentage of your baseball teammates do you think will be signed by a major league team?
- a. Less than 10%
 - b. Between 10 and 20%
 - c. More than 20%
41. If anything happens, and you are not signed, are you going to go back to school?
- a. No, I'd rather work or something else
 - b. Yes
42. If you were given a choice, what would you prefer?
- a. Receive 50,000 Dominican pesos, guaranteed
 - b. Toss a coin to either receive 200,000 Dominican pesos or nothing
43. If you were given a choice, what would you prefer?
- a. Receive 1 million Dominican pesos right now
 - b. Receive 20,000 Dominican pesos a month for the next 10 years
44. How much do you think a person who finishes primary school or secondary school, but doesn't go to college, earns a month? (Write the amount in Dominican pesos without commas or letters.)
45. How much do you think a person who finishes college earns a month? (Write the amount in Dominican pesos without commas or letters.)
46. What are your hobbies besides playing baseball? (Choose all that apply.)

- Play another sport
- Playing a Musical Instrument / Singing
- Draw paint
- Dance / act
- Read stories / novels / comics
- Playing video games
- See series / movies
- Belong to a church congregation
- Volunteer
- Visiting families / friends in other towns / cities
- Learn or practice another language
- Go to the gym
- Use social networks
- Hanging out with friends
- Reunite with family
- Watch sports on T.V.
- Go to the field
- Play pool
- Play domino
- Other specify [Text entry]

Focus Group Guide for Industry Trainers

#	Questions
L	General/Introductory Questions
1	Everyone introduces and says their name, organization and role within the local baseball industry.
2	What would you say are the elements that characterize the baseball prospect training industry in the country (briefly)?
3	Who can tell us about your experience as a scout or interacting with scouts (formal and informal)?
4	Who can tell us about your experience interacting/training players?
L	Sports Opportunities
5	How developed is the baseball training industry? What elements incentivize or limit the growth/performance of this industry? Would you say it has reached its potential?
6	How does the state motivate or regulate the lead training industry? What resources or supports do coaches and/or recruiters have? (e.g. public stadiums, tournament organization, coaching training)
7	How does the MLB motivate or regulate (which rules) the prospect training industry in the country? What do the local industry's own actors do to strengthen themselves and/or self-regulating?
8	What could the government do to help foster sports baseball opportunities? Specifically, to improve the baseball training industry?
8.1	What else could MLB do? What about the leagues or academies?
9	Have any of you approached the government (e.g. MIDEREC, MINERD, INEFI) to help solve problems affecting the lead training industry or its players? Share what that approach was like and whether it led to any collaboration or outcome.
9.1	What about other actors? (E.g. the academies themselves, FEDOBE, MLB, major league teams, scout associations, foundations and NGOs, private companies, international bodies, among others) have come to propose solutions to problems affecting the training industry and its players?
10	Have any of you interacted with the U.S. International Cooperation Agency for any projects? Share the experience.
L	Educational Opportunities
11	At what age do players start training for a major league team?
12	On average, how many organizations/leagues/academies pass a prospect before signing him with a major league team?
13	What would you say is the educational profile of the average player who signs with a major league team? Do you think this level of education is sufficient? Do you think this could affect the subsequent performance of the players?
14	Have any of you or your organizations had to provide remedial education actions to players? On what topics and for what purposes?
15	What (cognitive) skills do you learn at school need a professional baseball player?
16	How do you understand that the local baseball training industry can benefit from better educated players?
17	What limits players to learning or continuing to study? (E.g. distance from schools, costs of studying, lack of time, removal of province, etc.)
18	How far or what level of education should a professional baseball player achieve?
19	Is it possible to study regular hours and train in a lead program?
20	What is your opinion on the quality of the Saturday school? How can it improve?
21	How do you visualize players still studying without leaving their big-league dream? What ideas or examples can you think of?
22	Do you think industry players are willing to collaborate with projects to improve player education? What would you worry about? What would they oppose?
23	How could your organizations improve players' educational opportunities/conditions? What help do you need to achieve this?
L	Actions Underway
24	What initiatives or projects do you know of that are, or were, contributing to improving educational progress or the quality of player learning?
25	Are you aware of initiatives involving public sector schools?
26	What has prevented past projects from succeeding or continuing? What lessons learned?
L	Regulations
27	Does the State know how the comprehensive welfare of underage signed players or underage players in the process of being signed?
28	How do you protect the well-being of players and their families? Do you follow any regulations?
	Other
29	Why are players so signed young? Are there other alternatives?

Focus Group Guide for Prospects Between 9 and 15 Years Old

Dimension I. Educational Experience and Education Assessment

We know that all or most of you have attended either a public or private school at some point. We want to know your experiences in these schools with your teachers, with your subjects and in general with sports facilities.

Question 1. Educational Space

How would you describe the facilities of your schools? What was the building like?

Note to interviewer: Ask follow-up questions about hygiene, bathrooms, spaces, furniture and in particular science laboratories.

Question 2. School Climate

What do you think cohabitation was like at that school? What was the relationship between the students like? What was the relationship between students and teachers like? Was there much indiscipline, incidents of violence or bullying?

Note to interviewer: Define bullying as an incident in which a student was physically or verbally assaulted.

Question 3. School Sport

Let's talk about sports or physical education classes. At school, were there sports courts or fields? What sport? What were your physical education classes like? What sports were played in physical education class and recess?

Note to interviewer: Confirm if they received theoretical physical education classes.

Questions 4. Parent Involvement

Did your parents or guardians have the opportunity to meet their teachers or school principal? For what reasons? How often?

Question 5. Parent Expectations

To what degree do your parents consider that you should complete at school, considering that you want a career in baseball?

Question 6. Teacher Expectations

Has any teacher ever had the opportunity to talk to them about life after they finish their studies? What did they tell you?

Question 7. Peers and Performance

In your course last school year, were there many children who had repeated the course? Were there students who couldn't read or write in the same courses as you?

Note to interviewer: Encourage them to highlight any performance-related aspects of their classmates.

Question 8. Peers and Desertion

Think of your two best friends from last school year's school. Did they want to go to college? Why? What did they want to study?

Question 9. Economic Valuation of Educational Investment

For this question, I want you to agree to give a group answer. Converse to reach a consensus: How much do you think a person who only finished 8th grade earns per monthly salary? And a person who completed high school?

Note to interviewer: We are interested in hearing the arguments for defending one salary over another.

Question 10. Social Assessment of Education

Imagine a hypothetical scenario in which tomorrow it is decreed that each Dominican will be allocated a monthly salary of RD\$ 100,000 pesos from the age of 18 onward. In that case, people would only work if they wanted to because they would no longer need to work to support the other. A legislator wants to propose that the school be mandatory only up to 4th grade to learn the basic skills: reading, writing, adding, subtracting, etc. The idea is that the rest of the courses can be completed by those who want to. What do you think of this?

Note to interviewer: Expect at least two to answer to ask the next question

Question 11. Social Assessment of Education

In addition to earning money, why is it important for people to go to school?

Dimension II. Time Use and Baseball Training

Now let's talk a little bit about your interests, including baseball. The following questions are about things you do in your day-to-day life and things you do for fun.

Question 12. Hours of Baseball Training

How many hours a week do you practice baseball? Of all the time you spend on baseball in a month, what percentage do you spend on improving your physical performance? What percentage to improve techniques for your position? What percentage do you spend playing baseball directly?

Question 13. Pressures and Risks

Do you think there is a lot of pressure on a prospect to get him to sign at an early age? Why? What is the main risk to which a baseball prospect is exposed and which you take greatest care of? (E.g. substance abuse, injuries, etc.)

Question 14. Education in Baseball Leagues

Describe what your leagues' educational programs or lead programs consist of (if any).

Question 15. Time Use

What do you do when you're not playing baseball or studying? What do they like to do the most?

Note to interviewer: Ask options such as going to the movies, watching movies and playing video games.

Question 16. Technology Use

Let's talk about using technological tools. What do they do most on the internet? Which social networks use the most? What is your internet access like?

Dimension III. Life Plan and Risk Aversion

Question 17. Productive Interests Other than Baseball

If you didn't want to be a baseball player, and there were no financial restrictions, what would you like to do and why?

Question 18. Risk Aversion

Now I'm going to give you two scenarios, pick one and write it on the paper (interviewer supplies). Then they tell me why they chose the option. We'll do this three times.

Which do you prefer?

- A. Receive RD\$ 50,000.00, guaranteed
- B. Toss a coin to receive RD\$ 200,000.00 or nothing

Which do you prefer?

- A. Receive RD\$ 1 million right now
- B. Receive RD\$ 20,000.00 a month for the next 10 years.

What do you prefer?

- A. Receive RD\$100,000.00, guaranteed
- B. Receive RD\$100,000.00, guaranteed, and toss a coin, to either receive or lose an additional RD\$50,000.00

Dimension IV. Social and Family Environment

Question 19. Exposure to Educational Success Stories

Did anyone in your family or community go to college? What did they study?

Question 20. Family Composition

Who do you live with at home? Have you always lived in the same place?

Focus Group Guide for Prospects' Parents

Dimension I. Your Children

Question 1. Motivation to Involve your Children in Sports

Who initially involved your son in baseball? What motivated you most to support him? What do you like most about him participating in this sport?

Question 2. League Team and Coach

Why did you select this league? What benefits does it offer your child in relation to what another might offer? How often do you talk about your child's evolution?

Question 3. Support for Baseball Training and Education

Do you think it is possible to prepare to be a baseball player and at the same time go to school? Do you think doing both puts pressure on young people?

Question 4. Probability of Not Being Signed

By nature, the baseball industry leaves many players in its tracks. We understand it is part of the game. Do you have any Plan B in case this happens? What do you think your child would like to do in case he doesn't get a signing contract?

Question 5. Pressures

Do you think there is a lot of pressure on a prospect to have him sign at an early age? Why?

Question 6. Risks

What is the main risk to a baseball prospect? (E.g. substance abuse, physical injury, verbal assault, etc.)

Question 7. Obstacles to Studying

What is the main obstacle you perceive baseball prospects face in graduating from high school relative to other non-athlete youth?

Question 8. School

How old are your children? Are they still studying? In case they're not, why?

Question 9. School

Do you know the principal or teacher at the school your child attended or attends?

Question 10. Educational Offering

If your child was offered the opportunity to attend the Extended Day school, would it cause your child to reduce his baseball hours? What if it was a Professional Technical High School?

Note to interviewer: Define what a technical high school is, if necessary.

Questions 11. Educational Costs

Do you think it's expensive to send your children to school? Do you think more public help is needed? What are the main costs?

Dimension II. Parents

Question 12. Economic Valuation of Educational Investment

For this question, I want you to agree to give a group answer. Converse to reach a consensus: How much do you think a person who only finished 8th grade earns per monthly salary? And a person who completed high school?

Note to interviewer: We are interested in hearing the arguments for defending one salary over another.

Question 13. Educational Alternatives

What educational alternatives does a person who doesn't want to or can't go to college have? What do you know about higher technical education options in the Dominican Republic? What are vocational education options? How much do these things cost?

Question 14. Educational Success Stories

Did any direct family members complete high school? University studies?

Question 15. Occupation

What do you do? Would you like your children to do the same as you if they weren't baseball players?

Annex III. Data Collection Schedules

A. Programs Contacted in the Survey Process

League Name	Province	Municipality	Date (2020)
Liga Deportiva Astros de Yoly	Distrito Nacional	Distrito Nacional	October 21, 2020
Miranda Unión De Ligas	Distrito Nacional	Santo Domingo de Guzman	October 22, 2020
Liga Deportiva Galvez	Duarte (San Francisco de Macorís)	Cenoví	October 28, 2020
Programa de Baseball Leo Rodríguez	Peravia	Peravia	November 1, 2020
Liga Carlos Mota	Peravia	Baní	November 1, 2020
Liga Delfines de María	Puerto Plata	Puerto Plata	November 5, 2020
Liga Peña Martínez	San Cristóbal	San Cristóbal	November 2, 2020
Liga Jose Vizcaino	San Cristóbal	San Cristóbal	November 2, 2020
Liga FJ	San Cristóbal	Sainaguá	October 25, 2020
Blue Escape Baseball Academy	San Pedro de Macorís	San Pedro de Macorís	October 25, 2020
Academia Brito	San Pedro de Macorís	San Pedro de Macorís	November 6, 2020
Chay Baseball Academia	San Pedro de Macorís	San Pedro de Macorís	October 30, 2020
Liga Wilki Willen	San Pedro de Macorís	San Pedro de Macorís	October 30, 2020
Los Bravos de Potezuela	Santiago	Licey al Medio	October 29, 2020
Academia Luigi Dron	Santo Domingo	Santo Domingo Norte	November 5, 2020
Liga Hato Nuevo	Santo Domingo	Santo Domingo Oeste	November 2, 2020
Los Buloya del Brisal	Santo Domingo	Pedro Brand	October 28, 2020
Liga Deportiva Enrique Campusano	Santo Domingo	Los Alcarrizos	October 26, 2020
Liga Deportiva Juan Freddy	Santo Domingo	Santo Domingo Norte	October 21, 2020
Liga Deportiva Colina del Norte	Santo Domingo	Los Alcarrizos	November 3, 2020
Liga la Francia	Santo Domingo	Santo Domingo	November 3, 2020
Escuela de Baseball Alex Rodríguez	Santo Domingo	Santo Domingo	October 26, 2020
Liga Deportiva Cristo López	Santo Domingo	Santo Domingo Norte	October 23, 2020
Liga de Béisbol Caba	Santo Domingo	Santo Domingo Norte	November 2, 2020
Liga Julian Javier	Santo Domingo	Santo Domingo Norte	October 22, 2020
Liga Deportiva Joel Suarez	Santo Domingo	Santo Domingo Este	October 23, 2020
Otro Nivel Baseball Academy	Santo Domingo	Santo Domingo Este	October 23, 2020
Liga Deportiva Atlético de Mota	Santo Domingo	Santo Domingo Oeste	October 23, 2020
Los Mellos	Santo Domingo	Santo Domingo	November 2, 2020
Liga Hermanos de la Cruz	Santo Domingo	Santo Domingo	November 2, 2020
Roberto Baseball School	Santiago	Santiago	October 29, 2020
Play Frito Lay	Santo Domingo	Santo Domingo Este	November 6, 2020
Play La Media Naranja	Distrito Nacional	Santo Domingo de Guzmán	November 2, 2020

B. Focus Groups

League's name	Format	Date
Encuentro con Entrenadores Informales	Virtual	Wednesday, August 26, 2020
Academia de Baseball Felo	Duarte (San Francisco de Macorís)	Saturday, October 10, 2020
Academia de Béisbol José Soriano	Santo Domingo	Monday, October 12, 2020
Liga Deportiva Mejía	Santo Domingo	Saturday, October 17, 2020
Academia de Baseball Padilla	Duarte (San Francisco de Macorís)	Thursday, October 15, 2020
Academia Lugo	Peravia	Monday, December 11, 2020
Academia Nube	Santo Domingo	Wednesday, November 18, 2020

C. In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)

Title	Date
Governing Body for the Protection of Minors	September 30, 2020
Staff from INEFI	November 17, 2020
Released player dedicated to training signed prospects	December 2, 2020
Former major leaguer and prospect rights activist	October 23, 2020
Pre-signature lead coach	January 26, 2021
Staff from MINERD	October 10, 2020
Staff from MINERD	September 19, 2020
Authorities school specializing in baseball	November 5, 2020
Former MLB executive/ former head of MLB international operations	November 12, 2020
Experienced academic studying international prospective recruitment from the University of Pittsburgh	October 16, 2020
DR Baseball Commissioner	November 23, 2020
Staff responsible for educational programs at Dominican training academy	September 17, 2020
Psychologist in charge of remedial program for signed prospects	November 11, 2020
Bank staff managing lead signing process	December 10, 2020

Annex IV. Highlights of Comments by Stakeholders of the Advisory Committee for the Study

Meeting Report

Event: Study presentation: Educational Opportunities for Baseball Prospects in the Dominican Republic.

Date: Thursday, December 2nd, 2021.

Participants: Representative of different public and private institutions within the educational sector and baseball industry in the DR. The organizations which attended the event were: Ministry of Education of the Dominican Republic (MINERD), National Commissioner of Baseball, Pedro Martínez Foundation, BHD-León Bank, Entrena, Grupo Línea Base, Rethink Education (RED), Jhadiel Foundation and Inicia Foundation. Also, there were representative from different baseball academies and MLB teams. Moreover, this event was live through a Zoom meeting with participants who represent other MLB teams and USAID based in different places in the United State.

Description:

The United State Agency for International Development (USAID) suggested the presentation of the study: Educational Opportunities for Baseball Prospects in the Dominican Republic, in order to share among stakeholders the results and recommendations from the study.

Guided by John Seibel (Entrena), supervisor of the study, the event started with the presentation of the participants and their organizations. Later, the study was presented by Carlos Ramos (Grupo Línea Base), who described the context, methods, findings and recommendations of the study highlighting the following:

- This study was conducted in the Dominican Republic, where the salaries and contracts of baseball players increase more and more each year. This scenario has an influence in the Dominican culture generating more than 3,000 prospects registered to be eligible to sign a contract. At the same time, there is an informal market developed to guide and to train the prospects and their family in order to achieve this goal. Despite all this, only 3% percent of the prospects sign a contract to play professional baseball, leaving behind a large population of adolescents who change their schooling routine, so they can train and achieve the requirements to sign a contract.
- The sample was compiled by identifying more than 800 informal baseball leagues across the DR. It is important to highlight that this kind of sampling, is the first done in the country within the baseball industry. To collect the data, the researchers interviewed a representative sample of the prospects. Also, they carried out focus groups and interviews with the families, trainers, team and MLB representatives, education specialists and public institutions.

Among the conclusions, the following were highlighted:

- The irregularities found in the Dominican baseball industry are known by many authorities, however, the solutions proposed by the government have been limited.
- The prospects qualify as deficient their school sport equipment and they do not know about any school baseball tournaments in which they can participate. Also, the Dominican physical education program does not fulfill their expectations.
- The prospects, trainers and tutors do not perceive any difference in the quality of the regular education programs and those that are flexible or specialized.
- 23.7% of interviewed prospects were older than the corresponding age for the grade they were attending (over-age). This situation increases their probability of dropping out school.
- The prospects and their family perceive that achieving a high school degree is more important than the quality of learning.
- The prospects could be overrating their real probability to access the opportunity of signing a contract. The majority think the probability is between 10 to 20% but the reality is a 3%.
- Negotiations between the families and informal trainers are not legislated or supervised by any governmental agency.

Finally, the participants shared their comments, opinions and suggestions:

- Education is a key aspect to develop each prospect, so they can take advantage of the opportunity of signing a contract.
- It is very important to work with trainers, so it is possible to change the mindset transmitted to prospects and their families.
- There is a need of creating an interinstitutional commission with recurring meetings to meet the prospects' needs. This commission should be led by the National Baseball Commissioner, MINERD, MINEREC and CONANI.
- It is important to work with the families, so they can empower themselves and guide the prospects during this process.
- The prospects and families need to be guided in topics related to vocation, educational opportunities, finances, etc.
- Communities need the tools to practice baseball in a more organized way and the construction of baseball fields. Also, this will include the organization of regional and national baseball tournaments.
- For the educational system, it is important to work in the following initiatives: trainers' certifications, league accreditations, parent training, education based on values, the creation of sport high schools, among others, in order to meet prospects' needs.
- Prospects should receive psychological support during all the stages they go through in their experience within the baseball industry
- Use success stories of players who have been released but have had success in other fields outside of baseball. It is important to include information about educational opportunities such as, sports scholarships and programs for baseball players. Also, prospects should receive training in standardized tests, such as SAT and TOEFL.
- The educational programs implemented by MLB teams at their Dominican academies can serve as a reference and starting point for the creation of educational activities for the young prospects in the informal sector.

This event was the starting point for the conversation about the education for the baseball prospects in the DR. According to the participants, even though this aspect has been ignored for a long time, it is important to ensure the wellbeing of children and adolescents exposed to the baseball industry. This is required in order to completely protect their rights. USAID identifies the importance of baseball for the Dominican society; therefore, they consider this as an opportunity to use Positive Youth Development (PYD) to match the needs of this vulnerable population of adolescents and young people.