South-South Cooperation: Can it work in Australia?

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A Brief Dip into History

• 1827. Hobart Mechanics Institute – first ‘provided’ adult education institution in Australia
• 1837 London Workingmen’s Association Charter – birth of the Chartist movement
• 1844 – the Rochdale Pioneers – the first working class Cooperators
• 1854 – Eureka Rebellion on Victorian Goldfields
• 1864 – 76 : First International
• 1889-1916: Second International
• 1919: Third International – the Comintern
Paulo Freire 1921-1997

“The way to honour him is to live out the reality of what must never degenerate into an idle slogan: *Don't mourn, organize.* Paulo would demand no less. Let us at least attempt to do the impossible—to fill the void left by his passing in a way he would want….

There are hard questions to ask radically and to answer—and educational work to be done. His life may be over, but his legacy remains a living presence within all of us who demand justice.”

Michael Apple (1999, p.5)
Activism, solidarity & popular education


October 1975
“I believe in the transformation of man (sic)”
Home-made Vicente Sahe poster with Paulo Freire photo, Bucoli, 2005
• What is a mass literacy campaign?
• Timor-Leste’s two campaigns
  – 1975-78 Rai Timor Rai Ita Nian (Timor is our Land)
  – 2007 -12 Los Hau Bele (Yes I Can)
• The Australian Yes I Can campaign pilot in Wilcannia NSW 2011-2012

Reflections
• South-South cooperation
• Paulo Freire, humanisation & solidarity
Some International Literacy Campaigns

- Cuba 1961
- Tanzania 1971
- Guinea Bissau 1975
- Mozambique 1978
- Nicaragua 1979
- Kerala 1988; India 1990s
- Venezuela 2003-2005
- Bolivia 2006-
- Timor-Leste 2007- 2011
- Grenada 2007-

Mass literacy campaigns: a key element in the ‘popular education’ tradition
What is a literacy campaign?

“The mass campaign approach… seeks to involve all segments of society in order to make all adult men and women in a nation (BB: or region) literate within a particular time-span and is often part of a policy of overcoming poverty and injustice through mass mobilisation”

(Lind 1988)
The Campaign Model

• Three phase campaign
  – Socialisation & mobilisation
  – Basic literacy classes
  – Post literacy consolidation activities

• Utilising Yo Si Puedo (Yes I Can) materials from Cuba, supported by an adviser from IPLAC in Havana

• South-south cooperation, working in 28 countries
‘Timor is Our Country’

Pages from 1975 FRETILIN Literacy manual.
Dr. Antero Da Silva, presenting on his research at a Seminar at Sydney University, 50th Anniversary of Cuban Literacy campaign, May 2011

Literacy Class in a FRETILIN Resistance Base during the Indonesian occupation
Education Vice Minister Ilda Da Conceicão, with Deborah Durnan, signing Regulation creating National Literacy Campaign Secretariat, Dili, Jan 2007
Nuno Rodruiges, Campaign Secretariat member from Dai Popular network, explaining Campaign Structure during District Coordinators Training, 2007
Conselho de Ministros.

Ministra da Educação e da Cultura.

Secretariado

Sub-comissão Técnica
Sub-comissão Logística
Sub-comissão Divulgação
Sub-comissão Estatística
Sub-comissão Doi
Sub-comissão de Apoio e Outros
Sub-comissão de Apoio a Outros

Comissão Regiões da Alfabetização.

Comissão Distrital da Alfabetização.

Comissão Sub-distr.

SUCOS
Literacy class, Venilale, Baucau District 2007
Literacy class Liqueca 2007 (Note TV not working, no fuel for generator)
A Literate Moment
Liquica, Timor-Leste 2006
Literacy class graduate Atauro Island 2010
The Wilcannia Campaign Pilot

Campaign Banner Designed by Local Youth Centre
Pilot Aim – from contract with DEEWR

“The aim of the project is to trial a twelve-month pilot campaign. This must utilise an internationally-recognised mass campaign model, not previously deployed in Australia. You must assess whether this model can be applied successfully in an Aboriginal community; and discover what would be involved in up-scaling it from community to regional level, and then to other regions.”
Specific objectives

a) Mobilise the Wilcannia community leaders to address the problem of adult illiteracy, in partnership with community agencies and government departments, including the local School

b) Contextualise an internationally-recognised adult literacy campaign model with associated resources to the specific local situation of an Aboriginal community

c) Train local Aboriginal tutors and organisers in the campaign model
Objectives (continued)

d) Make significant measurable improvements in English literacy among 50-60 participants in the pilot, drawn from Aboriginal adults in the Wilcannia community with minimal English language literacy.

e) Create a pool of people ready to move into pre-vocational and vocational employment programs under the Remote Service Delivery Local Implementation Plan 2010-2014 for Wilcannia.

f) Organise rigorous testing of the campaign model by qualified adult literacy academics, to ascertain the viability of extending it to other communities…
Wilcannia Pilot Team
and more....
Project partners

- Lowitja Institute
- National Aboriginal Adult literacy Campaign Commission
- UNE
- Wilcannia Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Wilcannia Community Working Party (CWP)
- Wilcannia Central School
- Commonwealth Department of Innovation (WELL)
- Commonwealth Department of FaHCSIA (CDEP)
- Commonwealth-NSW Indigenous Coordination Centre (RSD)
The story so far

- Socialisation phase began August 2011
- Adviser arrived from Cuba January 2012
- Community launch February 7\textsuperscript{th}
- First classes opened February 13\textsuperscript{th}, approx 25 enrolled
- 10 participants graduated 8 May 2012; post literacy activities commenced
- 2\textsuperscript{nd} intake classes opened 14 May
- Second graduation six more students Aug 31\textsuperscript{st}
- Post-literate ongoing until October 31st
Post Literacy Phase

- Aim: to consolidate learning from initial classes and build pathways to a community of literate practice
- Formal and informal activities under sponsorship of local organisations
- So far:
  - Computer classes at Land Council
  - Cooking classes at Women’s Safe House
  - Market garden with local CDEP
  - Work experience on Shire
  - + WELL tutorial support
- Planned: TAFE Cert 2 Catering legal workshop, electoral education, men’s shed, kids’ reading group
A Visual Review
Outcomes (1): ‘Yes I Can’ assessments

1. **READING**: ability to independently read aloud and understand an unseen short text of one short paragraph length (about 2-3 sentences) using familiar basic and colloquial words and phrases on a personal or familiar topic based on his/her experience.

2. **WRITING**: ability to independently write a short paragraph (about 2 sentences) on a personal topic using familiar basic and colloquial words and phrases, with capital letters and full stops.

3. **WRITING**: ability to independently write a short (one paragraph) personal letter using a defined familiar format, greeting and sign off, and with capital letters and full stops, and commas.

4. **WRITING**: ability to independently write and sign name and date.

The assessment process occurs during the lessons 56 to 63 and the participants’ work is recorded in his/her workbook.
Outcomes (2): Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF)

“Ten students graduated from Yes, I Can and each one of these was able to demonstrate an improvement in two or more ACSF skills of Learning, Reading or Writing. Of the regular attendees four students demonstrated an increase in each of the three Core Skills. Once again it is important to acknowledge that the pre training assessments may have underestimated the reading and writing skills of the learners because they did not have the awareness of themselves as learners and lacked the confidence to demonstrate reading and writing skills.”

Report of ACSF Consultant, Philippa McLean (my emphasis)

Details re ACSF at http://www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Programs/LitandNum/ACSF/Pages/default.aspx
Some Positives

- Strong national leadership
- Community ownership, incl. local facilitators & leadership
- Broad bi-partisan government support – Commonwealth, NSW & Shire
- Graduate outcomes incl self-esteem, ACSF movement, post-literacy engagement & employment
- Commitment to keep going in Wilcannia & other communities

Some Negatives

- Lack of prep time for facilitators between launch and start of classes
- Lower than expected participation & retention, especially among younger people
- Complex project management & accountability
- Depressed local economy lowers aspirations, encourages self-destructive behaviours
- Multiple agency agendas

Overall reflection: Cuban model works, but needs more development
Total Aboriginal adult (15+) population no longer in school: 4,780

If low literacy = 40%, then target popn = 1,912

Total area: 285895.4 sq Kms
“The success or failure of a literacy activity does not ultimately derive from economic or technical issues, but rather from the existence or not of a firm political will with the capacity to organize and mobilize the people around a literacy project.”

Maria Torres, one of UNESCO’s best known international literacy experts, who was also, in the 1990s, the Minister of Education in Ecuador
South-South Cooperation

• “Global dynamics of knowledge production” privilege “northern theory” (Raewyn Connell)
• ‘Northern knowledge based on ‘northern’ experience
• Literacy is situated, in space & place; but place is not just geography, it is social and economic and cultural
• Remote Aboriginal communities – the third world ‘poking through’ the first
• The struggle for literacy, the struggle to humanise, is a global struggle
• Cuba: 50 years of literacy campaigning since 1961
Beyond the ‘culture of silence’

“Conquering the right to speak its word, the right to be itself, to assume direction of its own destiny, only the Third World itself will create the currently nonexistent conditions for those who today silence it to enter into dialogue with it.

As a man of this world, … I have only one desire: that our thinking may coincide historically with the unrest of all those who, whether they live in those cultures that are wholly silenced or in the silent sectors of cultures that prescribe their voice, are struggling to have a voice of their own.” Paulo Freire