

Good afternoon or should I say Boa Tarde?

I would like to introduce myself through Paulo Neves Freire:

Paulo and I were born in South America, his birthday was last Wednesday and mine was last Tuesday, so we are both Virgos. The stars say that Virgos are very analytical and could work dedicating our lives to others. So, Paulo and I became teachers. We do share a life story, but I won't bore you with that.

Why Paulo Freire?

Paulo would have been 91 on Wednesday, but unfortunately he passed away in 1997 from a heart attack. But he left an incredible legacy that I would like to share with you today.

Freire studied philosophy of language while undergoing a degree in Law. He never practiced as a lawyer; instead he decided to teach Portuguese at a high school.

In 1946, Freire was given the role of Director of Culture and Social Services Education at his home state's government, where he started his work teaching Portuguese literacy to people from low socio economic backgrounds. In Brazil at that time, literacy was a requirement for voting in presidential elections.

In 1961, Freire was appointed Director of Cultural Extensions at the University of Recife, his home city. In 1962, he formed a test group of 300 sugar cane workers and taught them how to read and write in only 40 hours without textbooks during 45 days. Freire criticised the traditional method of teaching literacy using textbooks only.

So, how did he do it?

Phases:

Teacher and students work together to:

1. Research: Choosing the most significant words and themes in the students' lives, including the words used by that particular community.
2. Create Awareness: Analysing the social meaning of those words and themes.
3. Challenge: Through dialogue, the teacher asks students to focus their attention on the reality that surrounds them, and posed as a problem, defies and inspires them to challenge that reality.

The Method:

1. Building a universal vocabulary.
2. Separating syllables using vowels.
3. Forming new words, using syllables with different vowels.
4. Social consciousness or processing learning situations.

Paulo Freire thought that the objective of adult literacy was to create social consciousness by allowing students to discuss everyday problems, comprehend the world that surrounds them and understand their social reality.

In response to this experiment, the president of Brazil called Freire to organise a national literacy campaign with the objective of bringing literacy to 2 million people across the country.

Between June 1963 to March 1964, around a million community members responded to the government's call. About 300,000 people were trained as literacy teachers and as coordinators of 20,000 culture circles in each capital city and regional areas. He had 6,000 people registered in Rio de Janeiro alone. Each culture circle was comprised of 30 trainers and each course lasted 3 months.

The training material was provided and the model surprised everyone due to its simplicity.

Unfortunately, there aren't any documented records on the results of the campaign. In 1964, a military coup d'état put an end to the current government and kept Freire in prison as a traitor for 70 days.

Knowledge is power.

After a brief exile in Bolivia, Freire worked in Chile for five years, there he published his most famous book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He calls traditional pedagogy the "banking model" because it treats the student as an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge, like a piggybank. However, he argues for pedagogy to treat the learner as a co-creator of knowledge.

In 1969, Freire was offered a visiting professorship at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, a year later, he moved to Geneva, Switzerland to work as an advisor for UNESCO on education reform in former Portuguese colonies in Africa.

In 1979, Freire was able to return to Brazil. In 1980, he moved back and joined the Workers' Party (PT) in São Paulo, and acted as a supervisor for its adult literacy project until 1986. When the PT won the municipal elections in 1988, Freire was appointed Secretary of Education for São Paulo, and from 1989 to 1991, he created MOVA - Movimento de Alfabetização de Adultos, or Adult Literacy Movement, a public program to support communities in their effort to bring literacy to adults, this model is still used today, especially by local government. This program led to the creation of EJA – Education for Young People and Adults.

MOVA works in partnership with organised communities (industry, religious groups, non for profit organisations, neighbourhood centres) across a Local Government Area. They have groups for mature learners, and people with a disability.

EJA has centres within the school system.

EJA requires a minimum age of 14 and MOVA, 15. A LGA hotline and its website provide the names of the organisations participating in the program. To become a trainer, participants must have completed at least Year 8, live in the LGA, and become members of MOVA. Then, they will receive training, their duties include organising classrooms with a minimum of 15 students and maximum of 25, and coordinating the 3-hour classes during the week and on Saturdays. They receive weekly supervision.

Thousands of people have been trained with this method across Brazil.

Freire not only inspired his countrymen but also many other countries in Latin America.

According to UNESCO, 13 countries of 19 which comprise Latin America have an average adult literacy rate between 90 and 100%. Out of 51.8% of the total global illiterate population, only 4.6% of Latin Americans are deemed illiterate. It is important to note that ALL Latin American countries have guaranteed free education, including university studies.

Spreading the love...

Chile:

Ensenar Chile: Foundation funded by donations from private enterprises and some support from the Chilean Ministry of Education to train qualified professionals in different areas to teach in the most vulnerable schools across Chile for 2 years. The foundation has the aim to provide quality education to all Chileans because one teacher can transform the lives of many.

Yo te Enseno – I teach you – Teaching digital literacy

Colombia:

Teachers are taught computer literacy online by catching the mouse. Show video.

And a lone teacher takes on remote communities with his donkeys. Show video.

Venezuela:

- Around 1940, the government started a mass literacy campaign across the country and increased its expenditure in education. Schools could be attended either in the morning or in the afternoon and in the evening; they became adult education learning centres.
- Literacy became everyone's business, as schools and churches trained everyday people on how to teach basic literacy. Teaching materials and books were donated by private, public entities and the general population.
- Volunteers travelled to remote communities to work with indigenous populations.
- 40 years later, the mass campaign was called 'Acude' or "Attend". Funded by private and public entities, and based on SONO-ESTUDIO Learning sounds (records, cassettes, books and a record/casstte player), the program used air time donated by TV and radio stations. Employees from private and public organisations learnt the system and helped fellow workers before/after work and during lunch breaks.

According to the UNESCO, Literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning. For individuals, families, and societies alike, it is an instrument of empowerment to improve one's health, one's income, and one's relationship with the world.

As, you may know, the 2006 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLS) funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) revealed that Australian language, literacy and numeracy levels have shown little improvement in the decade since the 1996 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and it found that almost under half of adult Australians cannot confidently read newspapers, follow a recipe, make sense of timetables, or understand the instructions on a medicine bottle.

Countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, Uruguay and Venezuela, have a rate of 97% or more, and are considered technically free of illiteracy.

In 2008, Cuba spent almost 14 of its GNP in education, while Australia spent 4.63%.

Literacy needs to become everyone's business.

These countries have used the Yo si Puedo Yes I Can method.

Yes, I can

Yo si Puedo is an 'alphanumeric' method delivered via audiovisual technology in 65 classes run for a minimum of 7 weeks and a maximum of 3 months. It takes participants from the known to the unknown, and like in Freire's method, engages them by discussing their social, economic and political environment. Participants own and control their learning process.

Participants are assessed based on 3 levels:

1. True Illiterate
2. Semi-illiterate
3. Illiterate with a disability - There is also versions of the program for people with intellectual disabilities and in Braille.

Class structure:

5 minutes – Icebreaker – Teacher and students discuss difficulties and find ways to address them.

15 minutes - participants watch a video followed by a 10-minute break.

15 minutes – participants discuss the video followed by a 10-minute break.

30 minutes – interactive learning using workbook.

15 minutes – discussion and analysis.

Sometimes, weekends could be used for catch up classes. Levels should not be advanced until all participants have agreed they are ready to proceed. Teachers must prepare lessons according to the videos. Each class is based on a combination of a letter with a number, for example the letter 'a' and the number '1'.

The method:

- Eyes and Ears: Looking and Listening
- Ears and Book: Listening and Reading
- Ears and Pencil: Listening and Writing

Resources:

- Facilitator's guide
- Student's workbook
- 17 videos

Training Program:

10 active learning classes comprised of:

5 classes: Psychomotor skills, oral communication and numbers up to 30.

5 classes: Vowels

42 reading and writing classes comprised of:

23 classes: Letters and phonics.

19 classes: For Spanish Literacy, special exercises to deal difficulties such as double consonants and special sounds. In these exercises, participants connect:

- a known number with an unknown letter
- a simple figure with a word from the vocabulary list

Then, participants:

- determine key words inside a sentence
- divide those word into syllables
- create new words, using syllables
- write a new sentence

13 consolidation classes comprised of:

12 classes: Writing and Script correction through games.

2 Classes: Reading and writing own sentences.

At the end of the program, participants practice reading and writing without audio-visual support.

There is a complimentary program called "Yo, sí puedo seguir" – 'I can continue' which assists participants finalise studies equivalent to up Year 6.

This method is inexpensive and flexible enough to be adapted to any country and/or community. It has been used in 28 countries, including New Zealand and Canada.

In 2003, the University of New Zealand piloted the Yo Sí Puedo method in two Maori and one Pacific Islander communities - with more than 5000 participants. Under the name Green Light, the program

had 3168 people in classes; and as of June 2008, 2092 of them had become literate and the program's high retention rates were maintained.

The University of New Zealand assisted the Canadian government in implementing Yo Si Puedo for various Indigenous communities in Canada, under the name ArrowMight. At the conclusion of the 44-week pilot, 92% of students had successfully completed the first module and 67% graduated from the program.

To adapt Yo Si Puedo (Yes I Can) in Timor Leste, Cuban teachers trained over 400 local tutors to run classes in every part of the country. In 2004, nearly 50% of the population of Timor-Leste was illiterate, by January 2010 over 45,000 adults, nearly one fifth of the total illiterate population, had successfully completed a thirteen week basic literacy course. The extraordinary achievements of this campaign are based on original research undertaken by Bob Boughton and Deborah Durnan from the University of New England in Armidale NSW.

Now, Bob has brought Yo Si Puedo to the town of Wilcannia in NSW. Each course runs for 10–13 weeks and, once finished, graduates will be provided with opportunities to pursue further studies or vocational activities based on their new-found literacy skills. Graduates will be supported in this by a Post-Literacy Coordinator, who will work with local authorities and Wilcannia Central School to design individual pathways for each participant.

The aim of this pilot project is to assess whether this model can be applied successfully in an Aboriginal community, and to discover what would be involved in up-scaling it to other regions. If the pilot proves successful, project leaders anticipate that a full-scale campaign could be rolled out across many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities over a three-year timeframe.

Latest research on Aboriginal literacy show that by the age of 15, more than one-third of Australia's Aboriginal students 'do not have the adequate skills and knowledge in reading literacy to meet real-life challenges

This program is a ray of hope and great news to address our Australian language, literacy and numeracy levels.

"If you can read this, thank a teacher." - Anonymous

Post Notes from Professor Bob Boughton:

1. The Yes I Can method really only works INSIDE the mass campaign model, the way it was done in Timor-Leste, Bolivia and Venezuela. The campaign is in three phases, with the Yes I Can classes being the second phase. The first phase, of mobilisation and socialisation, and the third phase, of post literacy, are equally important. That is the model we are using in the pilot in Wilcannia. If you were to use Yes I Can as a stand alone 'program', rather than as part of a mass campaign, I doubt it would work much better than conventional adult literacy programs.

2. The pilot in Wilcannia is being run by the National Aboriginal Adult Literacy Campaign Committee, which was established with funding from the Lowitja Institute. Jack Beetson is the on-site Aboriginal project leader. He has two technical advisers, Jose Chala Lebalnch, from Cuba; and Deborah Durnan,

from Australia, who support and train the local facilitators and assist with the overall management and coordination on site... I am the overall project manager for the Commonwealth funding, and I am leading the evaluation.

3. The NZ and Canadian projects you mention - Greenlight and Arrowmight - are quite different from Yes I Can, even though IPLAC was also involved in their development.

(thanks Bob!) ☺

Interested???, please contact me: wellbroker@cshisc.com.au

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