Reflections on papers delivered: An international perspective: Remarks on papers presented in the thematic stream, ‘Adult and Popular Education In Development’, Understanding Timor-Leste Conference

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It is an honour and a pleasure to be here. First and foremost, I would like to thank the organizers of the adult and popular education stream of the conference for their invitation to participate in this activity. I want to congratulate all presenters and participants in all the sessions yesterday and today for their informative and insightful presentations and for the intense –yet respectful– debates that followed.

I have been asked to share a few comments on the presentations and discussions of the last two days. I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity, but I must admit that it is not an easy task. I attended every session during the last two days and took detailed notes in all of them. As you can imagine, it is very difficult to summarize all this information, make sense of it, identify some of the key issues, and communicate that in a coherent way and in less than 20 minutes. While this task exceeds my limited talents, I will do my best to share with this plenary some reflections that I hope are useful for further discussion and potential research and action projects.

During these two days we were exposed to so much information and discussions that I don’t know where to start. Among other topics, we had conceptual presentations about issues related to adult education, popular education and peace-building, presentations on the history of adult education and popular education in Timor-Leste, presentations on the pedagogical approaches of popular educators and mainstream adult educators, presentations that reported on recent studies about current popular education programs, and presentations on the teaching of languages in schools and in universities. We also had discussions on the role of international solidarity, on community economic development, and on ethical issues pertaining research and on the dissemination of research findings.

I would like to begin by coming back to a statement made by the Minister of Education Joao Cancio Freitas in the inaugural session of this conference. Minister Cancio-Freitas said that Timor-Leste is a new country, but it has a history. I think that this is an important point. Given that 2002 marks the official beginning of Timor-Leste as a sovereign nation, this country is only seven years old, and this calls our attention to all the challenges and difficulties of nation-building in very unfavorable circumstances, because this is a country that has suffered big losses. We should not forget that this country lost approximately 25% of its people during the colonial occupation of the last quarter of the 20th century, and that at the time of independence almost 70% of the economic infrastructure of the country was destroyed. Still today there is a 50% illiteracy rate and the wounds of violence are still alive in many communities. At the same time, it is pertinent to remember that before 2002 Timor-Leste had a long and heroic history, in which at least one quarter of the population lost their lives in the struggle for independence. I would also add that there is no single history but a multiplicity of histories, and of course, many “herstories,” that is, the stories of the women of Timor-Leste. Some of these stories are well known, but others are still waiting to be written and shared, and we have much to learn from them.

Our conference stream dealt with adult and popular education. The objectives of this stream ranged from describing and analyzing the emerging adult education system in Timor-Leste to reflecting critically on the role of popular education in national development, to building a supportive and critical international community of professional practice, including academics, popular educators, solidarity activists and development partners. Of course, these are very ambitious goals and cannot be accomplished in two days, but the discussions in this conference represent one step further towards those goals. Indeed, this conference is just one moment in a process that started before this week and will continue after this. Furthermore, some potential outcomes of this conference may not be evident yet. For instance, the roots of the current national adult literacy campaign can be traced back to a large

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extent to the proposals made by the Dai Popular network at the OXFAM GB conference that took place in 2004. What I am trying to say is that many times there is an unforeseen impact of conferences like this.

Based on the presentations and discussions of the last two days, I would like to raise 12 questions, with the hope that at least some of them are useful platforms for further discussion, research and action. Since I am not going to be able to address all the issues discussed in these two days, I also hope that you add more questions to fill these gaps. I hope as well that these questions provide some input to the group that is preparing the recommendations from this track to the plenary session of this conference.

Some questions for discussion

Question 1: What do we know about the history of popular education in Timor-Leste?

Before we embark in this question, it may be useful to say a few words about popular education. Popular education is characterized by several features, which could be summarized in these four:

1. a rejection of the neutrality of education, which implies a recognition of the relations between knowledge and power and between structure and agency, and the acknowledgment that education can play a role to reinforce but also to challenge oppressive social relations and seek social justice.
2. an explicit political commitment to work with the poor and the most marginalized sectors of society, and to assist social movements in fostering progressive social and economic change.
3. a participatory and dialogical pedagogy that focuses on the collective, departs from people’s daily lived experiences and promotes an integration of popular and systematized (scientific) knowledge, and
4. an attempt to constantly relate education and social action, linking critical reflection with participatory research, mobilization and organization strategies.

Similarly, Mexican popular educator Carlos Nuñez, who sadly passed away in April 2008 distinguishes four dimensions in popular education:

1. Firstly, its ethical dimension acknowledges that adult education cannot be neutral, and hence it makes an explicit option for the poor, and a commitment to expand life and justice.
2. Secondly, its epistemological dimension refers to the understanding that the construction and circulation of knowledge occurs in social and historical contexts, and that human beings are subjects and producers of knowledge, not only passive consumers of knowledge. Hence, one of the goals of popular education is to nurture a critical reading of reality. As Paulo Freire noted, it is about reading the word and reading the world, and about writing the word and writing the world. It is about linking action and reflection, theory and practice. It is about knowing the world in order to transform it.
3. Thirdly, the sociopolitical dimension consists of a proposal for social change, which includes a strategy to nurture a different world, a world that is more just, democratic and human. The sociopolitical dimension implies working with social movements and engaging in coalition building.
4. Finally, the pedagogical-methodological dimension refers to a dialogical and participatory approach (as different from the banking approach). It is pertinent to note that the dialogical approach does not ignore that the knowledge of the teacher, and it recognizes that the teacher has a different role than the learner in the educational process, but nurtures a dialogical relationship.

Considering these features, we could ask, what do we know about the history of popular education in Timor-Leste? For instance, we know, from the very interesting presentations made during the last two days, about some of the popular education activities that took place from 1975 to 1978 in the mountains, after the Portuguese withdrawal and the Indonesian invasion. However, it is possible that we
have only scratched the surface, and there is much more to be known, not only about those years, but also about that the strong history of popular education Timor-Leste before and after the mid-seventies. It is also possible to suggest that the history of popular education is not well known outside a small circle. For instance, how much do the adult educators of today know about the precursors of popular education in this country? How much do they know about the ideas and the work of Vicente Sahe, and about the literacy campaign and other popular education initiatives that were carried out in the mountains of Timor-Leste in the mid-seventies? What was the role of women in those initiatives, and what was the role of the Organizacao Popular da Mulher Timorense (OPMT) in promoting gender equality within the social movements? What was the role of the student movement, and particularly the literacy brigades of UNETIM, and to what extent the tradition of that student movement is still alive in today’s student movement? Who inspired the work of Sahe, Maulear, Hata, and their popular education colleagues? What ideas did they take from Freire, from Cabral, and from other writers, and how did they combine them? What type of educational activities did they do in the mountains with adults and with children and youth? What can we learn from that history and what lessons can we extract for the challenges faced by popular education today?

Indeed, in the same way that it is important to reinvent Freire for the challenges of each particular context in the 21st century, it is important to reinvent the ideas of the precursors of popular education in Timor-Leste to the challenges of today. For doing so, the first thing is to familiarize ourselves with those ideas and with the history of the popular education movement in this country. One approach to reconstruct collectively that history is known as “naming the moment.” This approach, used in popular education circles in Canada and other places, helps us to identify key moments of the past, extract some lessons from them, anticipate changes and plan actions.

In examining the history of popular education in Timor-Leste, it is also important to consider the history of some of the “cousins” of popular education, such as community development, popular media, participatory action research, peace and human rights education, environmental education, and a variety of social movements involved in education activities. This analysis could help in identifying potential allies for a larger, stronger and diverse popular education movement, like the streams flowing together as suggested by the name of the Kadalak Sulimutuk Institute (KSI), whose work on popular education was also presented at this conference and I had the honor to see in practice in a rural community a few days ago.

**Question 2: What is the current role of adult education in national development in Timor-Leste, and what role should it have?**

As was suggested in the opening session of this conference, the kind of adult education system that a country builds will help to decide what kind of society it becomes. In this regard, one question comes to mind: What is the role of adult education in national development?

This reminds me of Julius Nyerere, former president of Tanzania, who at some point was asked to put an exclusive focus on children and schools. He replied that the nation could not wait until the children have become educated for development to begin, and then implemented a variety of adult education initiatives, including a mass literacy campaign that won the UNESCO Literacy Award. This does not mean that Nyerere neglected children’s education. On the contrary, he strongly believed in the importance of children’s education, and this translated into massive efforts that dramatically expanded children's access to primary education. However, he felt a sense of urgency in improving the living conditions of Tanzanians. As he used to say, “we must run while others walk.” He believed that investing in children’s education was not incompatible with investing in adult education. Moreover, he saw these two as complementary initiatives for sound national development.

We know that Timor-Leste has great challenges in terms of national development. This is a country just recovering from a terrible genocide and the destruction of large part of its infrastructure. As I mentioned before, over one quarter of Timor-Leste’s population died during the occupation of the last part of the 20th century, and just ten years ago, in late 1999, about 70% of the economic infrastructure was destroyed by the colonial occupation, creating a disaster from which this country is still slowly recovering. We also know that there are many issues with land tenure, partly because of the many family dislocations that happened during the war, and this is related to low trust in society. We also know that 76% of people live below the poverty line, and that in rural areas the percentage is close to 90%. We know that there is a very high level of infant mortality rates and unemployment. For Dili, the
unemployment rate is estimated at 45%, an alarming figure. In this city, we know that there are many youngsters who neither study nor work, a phenomenon that in Brazil is known as the ‘nem-nem’ generation, because ‘nem estuda nem trabalha.’ We also know that 34% of children fail grade 1, and that half of the adult population is illiterate. We learned from the Ministry of Education today that 85% of teachers are not qualified. We know that many children have to walk 5 km. to school and often are not properly nourished. We know that there is child labour, and alarming rates of domestic violence, and that sometimes teachers also exercise violence to discipline students or to punish them when they arrive late to class. We also know that poverty is not just about income, but about a multiplicity of factors. At the same time, we know that fortunately Timor-Leste has no debt, and that oil revenues are significant and could help to solve many of these problems. However, oil revenues account for almost the entire budget of the country, and we know that in the long run this is not a sustainable pattern to develop an independent and self-reliant nation.

We have heard several times during the conference that the struggle for independence was driven by two goals: first, to liberate the country, and second, to liberate the people. Then, we could ask about the meaning of these two goals. This question is usually answered in the direction and priorities stipulated in national development plans, and in the policies and resource allocations of the government in turn. It was also said in this conference that education is a key component of people’s liberation, and that literacy is a first step in that direction. Then, it is pertinent to ask: what is the role assigned to adult education in the development plan of Timor-Leste? What resources are being assigned to this sector? This is relevant because, as the saying goes, budgets are policies without rhetoric. Finally, what types of adult education activities and programs are being pursued, and how are they evaluated? Another set of questions has to do with the main purpose of adult education. Is it mainly about the training of the labour force for the demands of the capitalist world economy, or is it also about nurturing active and responsible citizens to become masters of their own destiny and promote endogenous, sustainable development in a justice-oriented society? Are adults conceived only as workers or also as citizens in the adult education model? If so, what does this mean in terms of adult education policies and programs? These are some of the questions raised during this conference, and of course there are not easy answers, because these questions relate to the big debates on adult education in any country.

Since my role here is not only to summarize and reflect on the issues discussed in the last two days but also to bring an international perspective to the conversation, now that I am raising the topic of the role of adult education in national development, I would like to make a comment on CONFINTEA. Since its first gathering in 1949 in Denmark, the international community of adult education meets approximately every twelve years, under the auspices of UNESCO, to analyze the situation of adult education and to develop guidelines for policy and action. This conference is known as CONFINTEA, which is the French acronym for International Conference on Adult Education. The last conference, CONFINTEA V, was held in Hamburg, Germany, in 1997, with the attendance of more than 1500 delegates from over 130 countries. The final declaration of CONFINTEA V stated that youth and adult education is not only a right, but also a consequence of active citizenship, a condition for full participation in society, and a powerful tool for fostering ecologically sustainable development, democracy, justice, gender equity, and scientific, social and economic development, and for building a world in which violent conflict is replaced by dialogue and a culture of peace based on justice. Hence, CONFINTEA V representatives agreed that the main objective of youth and adult education is to enable people and communities to take control of their destiny and society. To achieve this goal, CONFINTEA V set an agenda for action around ten main areas within youth and adult education:

1. adult learning and democracy
2. improving the conditions and quality of adult learning
3. ensuring the universal right to literacy and basic education
4. adult learning, gender equality and equity, and the empowerment of women
5. adult learning and the changing world of work
6. adult learning in relation to environment, health and population
7. adult learning, culture, media and new information technologies
8. adult learning for all: the rights and aspirations of different groups
9. the economics of adult learning
10. enhancing international co-operation and solidarity
I encourage you to visit CONFINTEA’s website to find the full text of the declaration and the details of this agenda, which provides guidelines for adult education worldwide.

This year, twelve years after the Hamburg conference, CONFINTEA VI was expected to take place in May in Belem, Brazil, to evaluate the progress made since 1997 and to set the agenda for the next twelve years. Unfortunately the meeting had to be cancelled due to the swine flu pandemic. Fortunately, it was recently announced that the meeting has been rescheduled and will take place on December 1-4, 2009. This would be the first opportunity for Timor-Leste as an independent nation to participate in CONFINTEA and to be part of the process of setting the international agenda for adult education. As importantly, this would be an excellent opportunity for the people of Timor-Leste to assess the progress made in the last decade in adult education, to examine the current state of adult education in the country, and to formulate the agenda for the next twelve years.

I would also like to mention that a few days before CONFINTEA VI, on November 28-30, there will be a gathering of civil society organizations involved in adult education. This meeting is called FISC, which is the Portuguese acronym of Fórum Internacional da Sociedade Civil, or International Civil Society Forum. This is organized by ICAE, the International Council of Adult Education, which brings together adult education NGOs from all regions of the world and that counts as past presidents people mentioned in this conference like Julius Nyerere and Paulo Freire. The FISC has three main goals. First, to push forward the recognition of adult learning and education as an important element of and factor conducive to lifelong learning, of which literacy is the foundation. Second, to highlight the crucial role of adult learning and education for the realization of current international education and development agendas, like the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), Education for All (EFA), the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) and the like. Thirdly, to renew political momentum and commitment towards youth and adult education, and to develop implementation strategies to move from rhetoric to action. I want to encourage all of you interested in adult education to be connected to FISC and to CONFINTEA this year. I would also like to encourage our colleagues in the Ministry of Education to submit the Timor-Leste report on adult education to CONFINTEA VI. I went to the website of CONFINTEA yesterday I was able to find the reports of most Asian countries but there was no report from Timor-Leste. The six-month postponement provides a great opportunity for producing this report.

**Question 3: What are the connections between literacy and the adult education system?**

This question relates to the vertical and horizontal coordination of the adult education system. This, in turn, relates to the articulation of educational actions carried out by government agencies, nongovernment organizations, community groups, international agencies, private providers, employers, and other actors. For instance, how to coordinate the different literacy programs currently being implemented in the country, in order to promote complementarity and avoid duplication? Another issue has to do with the evaluation of literacy programs. Literacy programs have a direct effect on people’s ability to read and write, but their impact goes well beyond that. For instance, several studies show that literacy increases feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy, improves people’s capacity to participate in the labour market and in collective decision-making in their communities, reduces domestic violence and contributes to gender equity. In other words, as UNESCO reminds us, literacy is not only a fundamental human right in itself, but a foundational skill for other life skills and a catalyst for participation in social, cultural, political and economic activities, and for learning throughout life.

**Post-literacy**

At this point, I want to call our attention to post-literacy programs, and ask a question: Once the literacy campaign is over, what human and material resources are going to be applied to post-literacy programs? By post-literacy I mean initiatives that help the newly literate to put into practice the skills acquired and to increase the knowledge obtained through the literacy campaign. This is important, because without serious efforts on post-literate, many of the gains achieved through the literacy programs may be lost. In carrying out efforts to eliminate illiteracy we should consider, as Rosa María Torres reminds us, that the purpose is not just to teach to read and write, but to nurture literate communities and societies in which people have the opportunity to read and write as part of their daily lives.
The lesson from Nicaragua is very clear. We may remember that in the late seventies, under the dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza, the illiteracy rate of Nicaragua was 51%. The literacy campaign carried out by the Sandinista government in 1980 managed to reduce the illiteracy rate to 12.5%. However, because they had to face a war, the government was unable to devote efforts to post-literacy programs, and as a result the illiteracy rate climbed to 34% in a few years. Only now, a few weeks ago, two decades later, the current Sandinista government, has declared Nicaragua free of illiteracy. Hopefully this can be sustained over time. In any case, the lesson from the Nicaraguan experience is that people need opportunities to practice the newly acquired literacy skills, or they risk losing them. Hence the importance of post-literacy activities.

Moreover, post-literacy activities can play a crucial role between literacy programs and other programs like adult basic education, which is known in Timor-Leste as the equivalence program and is coordinated by the office on non-formal education. Likewise, it is pertinent to ask about the coordination of adult basic education programs with job training programs (both for-the-job training and on-the-job training), and with other programs like health education, agricultural extension, environmental education, human rights education, peace education and the like. In many countries, these government programs operate independent from each other, and the ministries and secretaries that coordinate them are like silos without much communication among them. Adult education can play an important role here, nurturing collaborative projects.

Indeed, as the Global Campaign for Education has pointed out, adult education should be seen as the invisible glue, essential for the achievement of national development goals, and this requires inter-ministerial collaboration and active participation of civil society at all levels. Participation is essential to ensure that programs take into account the specific needs of marginalised groups, and promote active citizenship, health and wellbeing, and gender equality. In all of this, the popular education sector can ask itself which programs and activities that can carry out by itself, which ones should it carry out in partnership with government agencies, and which ones should implement in alliance with other social movements that are also seeking the democratization of education and societal democratization, like popular theatre, popular media, or the human rights movement. The question for the popular education sector is how to work in cooperation with other sectors without losing its autonomy and its purpose. This leads to the next two questions.

Question 4: Can popular education play a role in democracy, or is it only for resistance to colonialism/dictatorships?

In many countries, there is the assumption that popular education only makes sense in opposition, when social movements are struggling against a colonial power or a military dictatorship. It follows from this assumption that once democracy is re-established, there is no role for popular education in the new polity. While it is true that popular education is best known for the important role it played in oppositional contexts, it is also true that it can play an important role—and in fact it has played important roles—in different contexts.

In other words, in many repressive contexts popular education has located itself outside and against the state, in the struggles for liberation and democratization, but in other contexts it has also located itself inside and in collaboration with the state. In the same vein, popular education has often located itself outside the formal education system, but this does not mean that it could not play a democratizing role within the school system. Let’s remember that when Paulo Freire started his first literacy campaign in the early 1960s in Angicos he was working within the state (until he was sent to exile by the military regime that took power in 1964). Likewise, when Freire returned to Brazil in the 1980s he worked again within the state, and even within the formal education system, where he implemented the ‘Citizen School’ project in elementary education. In the meantime, during the late 1960s and the 1970s, popular educators in Brazil drew inspiration from Freire’s ideas to raise awareness and to organize social movements against the military dictatorships that ruled that country.

Of course, the transition from colonialism to independence, or from a military dictatorship to a democracy, requires also a transition in the role of popular educators, from a logic of confronting the state (sometimes in clandestine situations) to a logic of collaborating with it. Moacir Gadotti, the director of the Paulo Freire Institute, talks about the logic of the new scenario for popular education in relation to the state as being ‘tactically inside, strategically outside’, that is collaborating with the state in progressive educational initiatives but at the same time maintaining its autonomy and its relations.
with social movements. At the municipal level, popular education in many countries engage in the so-called ‘local power’ strategy, which consists on capacity building and local empowerment in connection to local experiments of participatory democracy.

Moreover, popular education can also make a contribution to the process of peacekeeping in Timor-Leste. There are still several issues that need to be addressed, from generalized domestic violence to harsh disciplining by teachers in schools to social or political disputes. As it was noted in several presentations, peace cannot be built from above; it needs to be built from below by Timorese people themselves through good processes.
The popular education movement, including peace educators, have accumulated a vast experience with these processes in different parts of the world and could make a modest contribution to generate a culture of peace.

In summary, I suggest that popular education can play a role not only in opposition, as part of liberation struggles, but also in nation-building and democracy-building. This requires significant changes in goals and strategies, as well as in re-assessing the relations with the state, with social movements, with community organizations, with political parties, with international agencies, and with solidarity groups, among others.

**Question 5: what is the balance between popular and education in popular education?**

I am raising this issue because, depending on the particular context and the historical circumstances, popular education can be considered as a political-pedagogical project, or as a pedagogical-political project. In other words, the political dimension and the pedagogical dimension are always present in popular education, but sometimes the political dimension takes precedence over the pedagogical one, and sometimes the pedagogical dimension takes precedence over the political one. Put it in a different way, Popular education sometimes is more popular, and sometimes is more education.

If popular education is both about awareness raising (the pedagogical dimension) and community organizing (the political dimension), the issue is how to find an adequate balance between the two dimensions, acknowledging that different circumstances may require different priorities. For instance, in oppressive situations characterized by violent repression and clandestine struggles, popular education efforts tend to focus on community organizing, mass mobilization and liberation struggles. In other situations, popular education can focus on good quality, dialogical pedagogical processes. Sometimes the emphasis on the political or the pedagogical dimension is not influenced so much by the context but by the background and characteristics of the popular educators themselves. Indeed, some popular education groups tend to value good pedagogical processes and put lots of energies into that, while others tend to minimize the importance of good pedagogical process and focus on political organizing and mass mobilization. In the former case, it is not uncommon to find an excessive emphasis on methods, techniques, and personal transformation, while neglecting the dimension of social change. In the latter case, it is not uncommon to witness banking education dynamics (including propaganda and indoctrination) carried out under the banner of popular education.

**Question 6: how can popular education navigate trends towards NGO-ization?**

This was an issue raised in several presentations, and it is a topic that is faced by popular education groups around the world. On the one hand, it is very good to have adequate funding (or with some funding at all) to carry out popular education programs and activities. On the other hand, it is pertinent to ask what can be gained and what can be lost in the transition from a grassroots popular education organization run by motivated volunteers and activists to an NGO run by paid employees. In considering this issue, at least three questions can be raised: Funding is important, but at what cost? Where does the funding come from? Are there conditions attached to it?

When popular education groups anchored in social movements become NGOs, they need to have a board of directors, write proposals that appeal to the agenda of the funders, and so on and so forth. When social movements become NGOs, there is usually a conflict between four logics: the logic of the communities, the logic of social movements, the logic of the NGOs, and the logic of the funders. Each social actor may have different goals, constraints, dynamics and times. For instance, the logic of community groups, social movements and popular education organizations is the logic of the process, which is based on elongated timeframes and a slow growth model that can speed up when members are in a hurry to achieve a particular goal or pursue a given activity. The logic of NGOs and funders is the
logic of the project, which is framed by specific timelines and deadlines. Moreover, as was noted in one of the presentations, sometimes the activities planned and organized by NGOs do not consider the internal organization and the distribution of tasks within the social movements, and this leads to misunderstandings and failures. Furthermore, social movements tend to have a longer and wider vision and are likely to establish coalitions, whereas NGOs tend to focus on the specific goals of the funded projects and in the sustainability of their own organization. Having said that, the logic of the process and the logic of the project are not always incompatible, and popular education groups can navigate those tensions more or less successfully. However, the tensions between the different logics are likely to be present, and it is better to be cognizant of them than to ignore them when social movements become NGOs.

Question 7: What about the languages of adult education programs in multilingual societies?
Timor-Leste is a multilingual society, with two official languages and two working languages. Additionally, over a dozen indigenous languages are spoken throughout the country. This opens the question about the languages to be used in elementary schools, in secondary schools, in universities, and in adult education. Moreover, this raises questions about the linguistic abilities of the teachers (because some teachers are not proficient in the language they are expected to teach) and about the preparation of teachers for teaching languages (because many teachers do not use the most appropriate pedagogical methods for second language acquisition). This is a complicated issue that will take time to sort it out, and will require particular attention from educators and researchers. The educational challenges faced multilingual societies are many and should not be underestimated. There is no easy formula to deal with these challenges, but to a large extent successes are linked to the quality of teaching, the nature of the programs, and the possibilities of learning in situations of immersion.

Question 8. What is the role of the social economy in a popular education strategy?
Given the high level of poverty, unemployment and underemployment in Timor-Leste, any popular education strategy (and any adult education strategy in general) should contemplate income generation activities, including the development of social economy enterprises such as agricultural cooperatives, credit unions, consumption cooperatives, social enterprises, bartering initiatives, green collar jobs, and the like. In this regard, it is pertinent to establish connections between adult education programs and community economic development initiatives, and explore the possibility of “scaling up” those initiatives by promoting larger economic projects that bring together different communities. The social economy (also known as popular economy or solidarious economy) can play an important role in helping people build a more egalitarian and participatory society, and adult education can play an important role in capacity building for this sector.

Question 9: Are the teaching-learning processes commonly used in adult education the most appropriate ones?
The issue of teaching approaches and learners’ participation was raised several times during the conference. Many references were made to the ‘banking’ and the ‘dialogical’ models of education, along the lines discussed by Freire. The first reflection I would like to make in this regard is that there is no direct correlation between banking education and schools, on the one hand, and between dialogue and adult education, on the other. Although in theory it is possible to expect that schoolteachers are more likely to use a banking model of teaching, and that adult educators are more likely to facilitate a dialogical process with their learners, in practice it is possible to find school classrooms that use a learner-centered approach, and adult education classes that use teacher-centered approaches. The use of a teacher-centered process in adult education is particularly unfortunate because one of the main principles of adult education is to recognize and value the knowledge of the learners and to draw on that experience, instead of demanding them to be passive recipients of information. In short, banking education can be found in schools, in universities and in adult education programs alike, and it will take time and effort to nurture a more dialogical and active pedagogical model that is project-based and involves learners in the co-creation of knowledge.

The second reflection I would like to make relates to the training of adult educators. In many cases the training of adult educators itself follows a banking model, so how can we expect that adult educators use a dialogical model when they were trained with a banking model? Moreover, even if
adult educators are trained with a dialogical model, it is not uncommon that once those adult educators are in a classroom they eventually revert to the banking model because that is the model that they are most familiar with since their early childhood.

The third reflection has to do with the argument that banking education is part of the ‘local culture’ of teaching and hence needs to be respected and accepted. In this regard, two questions could be raised. First, as was questioned during one of the sessions, is the culture of “teacher talk” a product of Timorese culture or a product of colonial culture? Second, in direct reference to language acquisition, does the practice of “teacher talk” really respect local culture? If so, does it respect the culture of teaching languages, or the culture of learning a language? I am asking this because the most natural way to learn to speak a language is by practicing it, by communicating in a particular context, and not just by listening to isolated words and sentences.

The fourth and final reflection on this topic has to do with the role of lectures in the teaching-learning process. I am putting this on the table because sometimes it is claimed that in a non-banking educational model there is no place for lectures. I think that there is a place for them, but under certain conditions. Indeed, I agree with Freire and many other popular educators that lectures have a role in any teaching-learning process, provided that those lectures are interesting and engaging, and are combined with other pedagogical strategies and with active group work.

Q10: How are the people of Timor-Leste going to benefit from international research on education? This was a question posed at one of the last sessions, and generated a great deal of discussion. The context of the question is that a significant amount of research in Timor-Leste (including research on education) is undertaken by researchers from other countries, and it is not always clear to what extent the research findings benefit the people of Timor-Leste. This is an issue that has ethical and practical dimensions.

I would like to make a few brief comments on this. First, the issue of the benefits of research for the communities that are researched is not exclusive of countries with high proportion of international researchers. Indeed, all around the world, the issue of the benefits of research for the community has been discussed for years in research circles, universities and community groups alike. In many cases, local communities argue that they are asked to participate in research projects in different roles (usually as interviewees), but then they have no access to the research findings. Having said that, it is clear that this problem can be exacerbated when the research team is from another country and publishes its research findings in a language that is different from the one spoken at the local communities.

Second, this concern has to do with the ethics of conducting research and with practical ways to carry out the research project and disseminating results. Some questions may be raised in this regard. For instance, is there an office of research ethics overseeing the research projects? What are the risks and benefits for the community? How are the research findings going to be communicated? Is there a role for the participation of local communities in the research design, data collection, data analysis or the dissemination of findings? In the case of Timor-Leste, is there a role for university students in these projects?

Third, the question on the dissemination of research findings is particularly complicated when multiple languages are used, as we noted in question 7. For this reason it may be appropriate, if funding is available, to publish conference proceedings, books and research papers in at least two languages, to increase people’s access to those materials. I am happy to report to you that the coordinators of this track secured some funding to publish the proceedings of this conference in English and in Tetum. This is very important, because this conference track took place in both English and Tetum.

Question 11: Are there enough community spaces for democratic deliberation and decision-making? We know that one of the best ways to learn democracy is by doing it, and that an active, critical citizenship cannot flourish if there are few opportunities to exercise it beyond the ballot box. Hence, it is pertinent to ask about the existence of democratic spaces for deliberation and decision-making about issues that affect people’s daily lives. What are the spaces for community deliberation in Timor-Leste? For instance, are there any experiments with participatory budgeting in Timor-Leste? Are there enough collective spaces to talk, to express agreements and disagreements, and make decisions? Are adult educators and community development workers involved in capacity building for local democracy?
Question 12: Are there enough spaces for popular educators to gather, network, and learn from each other?

Are there enough spaces in Timor-Leste for popular educators to get together, share experiences and ideas, network and propose actions? We know that popular educators have organized before in the Dai Popular Education network, but this network has been inactive since 2006. What are the possibilities for re-activating this network of popular education organizations? What are the preconditions that need to be present for this re-activation? Once this national network is re-established and working, it may be good to establish connections with ICAE, the International Council of Adult Education, in order to nurture relations with popular education networks from other countries. By the way, as I mentioned before, one possible opportunity in the short term to connect with ICAE members is the International Civil Society Forum, also known Foro Internacional da Sociedade Civil or FISC, which will take place at the end of November in Brazil, just before CONFINTEA VI. Another possible way to create spaces for gathering and sharing is to organize a Timor-Leste Social Forum, as part of the larger World Social Forum. This is a good space for the popular education movement to congregate and to make connections with other social movements like the human rights movement, the indigenous movement, the peace movement, the environmental movement and the like.

Final remarks

To conclude, I want to thank once again the organizers of this conference for allowing me the opportunity to participate, and I also want to thank all of you for your participation during the last two days. The 12 issues that I raised before are just a modest attempt to systematize the debates that we had in this conference, and to try to organize our future discussions along certain themes or questions. Of course, as I said before, each question could merit a conference on its own right, and many more themes and questions could be added (and probably will be added) to these initial twelve. I was asked to make some recommendations for this stream. My recommendation is very modest, and more than a recommendation is a wish. It would be great to have the conference proceedings published in English and in Tetum sometime in 2010, and hopefully we could also have a website on adult and popular education in Timor-Leste to post news and documents and to share information. This is all for now. Thank you very much.

Editors note

Since giving this paper, Daniel Schugurensky has moved to the Arizona State University in the United States. He can be contacted there via his website, http://schugurensky.faculty.asu.edu/bio.html, on which you can find many of his papers and publications on popular education.