

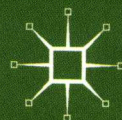
The Capacity to Share

A Study of Cuba's International
Cooperation in Educational Development



Edited by Anne Hickling-Hudson, Jorge Corona González,
and Rosemary Preston

Postcolonial Studies in Education



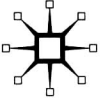
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Peter Mayo and Antonia Darder

The Capacity to Share: A Study of Cuba's
International Cooperation in Educational Development,
*Edited by Anne Hickling-Hudson, Jorge Corona
González, and Rosemary Preston*

This is a welcome volume on a postcolonial approach to education at the national and international level. It sheds light on the achievements of a country that captured the imagination of the world when on January 1, 1959, revolutionaries waged the first successful campaign against a Western-backed dictatorship in the region. The successful overthrow of the corrupt Fulgencio Batista regime and subsequent nationalization of assets, some of which were owned by the United States, meant a serious affront to the "Yankee imperialism" of Cuba's mighty next door neighbor. It also meant an end to Cuba as the financial and recreational playground of affluent US citizens and investors, as well as severing Cuba's role as another informal US colony influenced by the foreign economic policies of the Monroe Doctrine. With these momentous events, the possibility was that an alternative model could emerge from a region that had hitherto known only a colonizing model of governance, which had kept most of its inhabitants economically and politically disempowered.

It is not surprising, then, that the Cuban revolution served as a source of hope not only for the impoverished of Latin America but also for the rest of the Tricontinental World, to use a term adopted by the revolution's leading architect, the charismatic and tenacious Fidel Castro. He used the term during a visit to the UN and subsequently Harlem in New York City, where connections were made between the Cuban condition and that of one of the most impoverished US populations, namely, African Americans. This occasion and the use of the term, which connected with the name of the hotel where the Cuban delegation stayed, courtesy of the efforts of Malcolm X among others, captured a significant feature of the Cuban revolution, the subject of this volume—South-South international cooperation and solidarity. Castro's notion of "tricontinental" emphasized the idea of

solidarity with those in the continents and regions of Latin America, Asia, and Africa, three areas in which colonialism had wreaked havoc and left deep structural problems.

But the notion of “tricontinental” was not merely determined by geographical boundaries. The link with African-Americans and their leaders suggests otherwise. Castro and his colleagues, including the formidable Ernesto Che Guevara, understood the implications of the existence of the “third world” in the “first world.” Castro remained true to the commitment of solidarity with them when, even as recently as 2004, he offered Cuba’s help to oppressed groups inside that very same country that has been a major cause of the Cuban people’s hardships. These people included the impoverished of New Orleans, the home of jazz and blues—the music of the oppressed.

It is not surprising that the woes of impoverished North Americans were thrown into sharp relief for Cubans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. True to form, Castro offered to provide help in the shape of Cuba’s never-ending supply of highly trained doctors and health workers. Some took this as Castro’s ultimate insult to his mighty neighbor; and indeed US leaders must have regarded it so, promptly and flatly refusing this offer of help. However, what this volume so clearly brings to light is the commitment with which Cuba sought to alleviate poverty and support the oppressed anywhere, irrespective of their home country and its relations with the Caribbean island state. It is primarily a commitment to the global South, defined widely. The poor and forsaken of New Orleans and other impoverished North American communities, themselves victims of a US war fought on two fronts (against the Iraqis and the United States’ own people through social cutbacks to finance the Iraq war itself), are embraced as members of this global South.

There is no question that over the last five decades, Cuba has received much bad press in the Western media, which is hardly surprising given the revolution’s disruption of the status quo, with respect to both material wealth and power at home and the larger geopolitics of the region. Indeed, the isolationist reaction of the United States and its blockade against Cuba led the revolutionary Cuban government to the only alternative path available within the Cold War scenario of the time. Cuba moved into the Soviet Union’s orbit becoming a potential menace to the United States, given its geographical location—a situation that would come to a head with the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. The blockade and fomenting of counterrevolutionary attacks such as the *Bahía de los Cochinos* (Bay of Pigs) fiasco, as we would see later with the contra war in Nicaragua, served to make the revolutionary state more authoritarian in its efforts to weed out attempts at sabotage from within and without (not to mention the numerous attempts on Castro’s own life). Yet, there has always been strong internal and external support for the social reforms and idealism of the revolution, even among North Americans, many of whom disagree with their government’s policies toward Cuba.

The growing tensions in the region offered the Western media a field day, as if being in the USSR's orbit was not reason enough for portraying Cuba in a bad light. Yet, it is significant to note that there is no effort in this book to discuss the many controversial and contesting views of Cuba's politics. The volume, instead, simply seeks to do justice to a country that, much like Nicaragua after it, was forced to contend with all sorts of obstacles in its efforts to pursue a radical path, one that would serve as a revolutionary model to other countries within the US sphere of influence. Despite its problematic aspects, the Cuban revolution sought to evolve into an alternative political economic structure contesting the norms of that in the West, where capitalism has functioned to the benefit of the few at the expense of the many.

This volume courageously explores some of the notable international achievements of education in the Cuban model, linking these achievements to the revolution's educational and health systems that are the envy of many nations, including the much-heralded countries whose universities lead the world rankings. Though Cuban universities are not recognized in such rankings, their medical schools are widely considered to produce some of the best doctors in the world. Ask the many ambitious students from the formerly colonized countries of the Caribbean and Africa who strive to learn Spanish in order to gain admission to Cuba's medical schools. The same can be said of Cuba's science center lauded, in the late 1980s (Cuba now has many science centers), as a fine research institution in a program shown on *Rai* (Italian state) TV by that great connoisseur of Latin American affairs, Gianni Minà, editor of the Italian review *Latinoamerica*, who carried out a long televised and published interview with Castro himself. Or, ask former soccer superstars and other celebrities who went to Cuba to seek rehabilitation from life-threatening drug addiction.

Cuba places its educational and medical facilities at the service of not only its own people and such high-profile visitors, but also ordinary folk from countries in Africa, Asia, and many parts of the world. As part of its revolutionary commitment to international cooperation, with no strings attached, it provides thousands of scholarships and makes the products of these institutions (teachers, health workers, doctors) available for services overseas against token fees, depending on the receiving country's ability to pay. It is the bilateral, trilateral, or multilateral agreements in education generated by these forms of collaborations with other countries within the context of South-South cooperation that is the primary focus of this book.

This approach of horizontal South-South relations is contrasted with the more pervasive and dominant models of hierarchical North-South relations, which keep former colonies even today in a colonial bind. In addition, we now have the European Union joining the act with its Europe-aid programs, although it is to be said that the EU (like the US) is not monolithic. It contains spaces where people well aware of the problems of imperialistic models of "aid" use their influence in working groups and other EU epistemic communities to help develop less hierarchical forms of relations

with “developing” countries. EU involvement requires studies of the kind carried out here with regard to the older and more well-known forms of North-South aid. We now also have the Union of the Mediterranean, which also involves North-South relations in a regional context. Of course, it remains to be seen what consequences the current “debtocracies” in southern European countries will have on such a project.

Whatever the case, the South-South model of mutual cooperation has been consistently promoted by Cuba, even in its most difficult economic restructuring days post-1990 and at the time of a US decision (still not revoked) to boycott any firm that engages in commercial relations with the Caribbean island. The book presents this model as an alternative for international exchange. It is based not on predominantly business interests or financial profit, but instead on the revolutionary humanist principle of communal sharing. The world’s assets are viewed as the common birth-right of humankind, rather than simply the individual rights of a few. In a “delinking” process, assets in the South can be exchanged in a complementary manner (e.g., Venezuelan oil at low prices and interest rates for Cuban teachers, doctors, and health workers). They can also be shared to enable traditionally subordinated people and countries to delink from the structural residue of their colonial past. The contributors to this volume not only analyze these cooperative patterns as aspects of policy that characterize this model, they also provide a human face to the model with contextualized narratives of the students and teachers who participate in it, both in Cuba and internationally.

Rightly so, however, Cuba is not romanticized here. Economic and socio-political difficulties and experiments are noted in relation to their implications for education. There is also what some view as an overproduction of qualified people without substantial enough economic investments to absorb them. Yet, this small country might be a real threat to the propagation of an unbridled and irresponsible globalized market economy, as this volume suggests. From the very early years of the revolution, to the present, Cuba’s societal experiments in development and change have been the basis of its “capacity to share.” In its approach to international cooperation, Cuba might serve as a credible and more viable alternative to US-led capitalism. This volume invites us to consider critically whether the country, tackling current difficulties and embracing current change, has the potential to develop—through its *capacity to share*—into a microcosm of another world that is possible.

Foreword and Acknowledgments

Anne Hickling-Hudson

This book emerges from 30 years of friendship and professional interaction with Cuba. I first visited Havana as a participant in the Caribbean arts festival, CARIFESTA, in 1979, and was overwhelmed by the Cuban organization of vibrant arts environments showcasing the region's artistic achievements, as well as by the fun, partying, music, and warm friendship of the people. I was born and raised in Jamaica, yet as a result of my British colonial education there, knew almost nothing about the culture of our nearest island neighbor.

As my postcolonial education proceeded, I continued to be surprised by Cuba. In Jamaica, Cuba's generosity was demonstrated when it funded the construction of a high school and a sports college, donated tertiary scholarships, and provided visiting experts in the 1970s and early 1980s. I was aware that at the same time, Cubans were helping Nicaragua, Guyana, and Grenada in health, engineering, and education. During my two years as an educational planner and teacher educator in Grenada, on leave from my teacher education post in Jamaica, I witnessed the difference it made to an impoverished country when Cubans supported the island's experiment in popular, revolutionary change led by Maurice Bishop. This ended with the tragic collapse of the Grenadian revolution and US invasion in 1983. Cuba contributed significantly to the building of an airport, the adult literacy program, the production of textbooks for students, and provided over 350 university and polytechnic scholarships for Grenadian young people who would otherwise have had no chance of post-school education. I visited Cuba several times as part of the team of educators sent by Grenada to negotiate the education agreements. This launched my fascination with the Cuban education system and its ability to support this kind of internationalism.

In the 1990s, I visited one of my nieces who spent two years as a student of economics on a Cuban-funded scholarship at a Cuban university. We traveled on local buses to visit her many friends from all over the Caribbean and the world, at several of the Cuban universities. Although she changed her field of study to languages and literature and finished her degree at the

University of the West Indies in Jamaica, her time in Cuba was a formative experience in internationalism for both of us. In the meantime, I had moved with my family from Jamaica to Australia, but several times during the 1990s traveled back to the Caribbean region. On these journeys, I visited Cuba to interview students and university professors there about the island's extensive international scholarship programs that continued even as Cubans struggled with the economic crises brought on by the US embargo and sharply intensified by the 1989 collapse of the Soviet bloc.

These experiences, together with those of like-minded colleagues, led to this book. When I presented a paper on my research on the Cuban scholarships at a US/Cuba conference in 2000, Jorge Corona González, in charge of international relations in Cuba's Ministry of Education, was a participant in the conference. He was deeply involved in the Cuban scholarship program and had never before heard it described and analyzed by an outsider. It was at this conference that Jorge and I envisioned, discussed, and planned this book. Rosemary Preston joined us in November 2004 on the occasion of Cuba's hosting of the 12th Congress of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) in Havana. I was then the president of the WCCES, with overall responsibility for working with teams of Cuban and international educators to organize the congress. Rosemary, fluent in Spanish and with a background of research in Latin American countries, led the WCCES committee that was helping the Cubans prepare and coordinate international links with global comparative educators coming to the congress. Among the leading Cuban organizers of the congress were professors who have contributed to this book—Elvira Martín Sabina, Lidia Turner Martí, and Alejandro Torres Saavedra.

I want to acknowledge the sustained international collaboration and commitment over a decade that has gone into the writing of *The Capacity to Share*. Co-editor Jorge Corona González organized part of the research in Cuba. I thank him for traveling with me to carry out many of the interviews set out in the book, and for helping to develop the introduction and first three chapters during my visits to Cuba in 2001, 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2010. His insider insights into Cuba's development, philosophy of solidarity, and organization of international programs were invaluable. Jorge's fluent bilingual skills enabled him to translate the complex ideas of his colleagues into excellent English for me when necessary. We were assisted by Elvira Martín Sabina, who as director of CEPES, the Centre for the Improvement of Higher Education at the University of Havana, provided us with office space, computer resources, and frequent cups of strong, intensely sweetened Cuban coffee. Elvira, a scholar specializing in the organization and management of the Cuban education system, guided and worked with us in the analysis in chapter 3 of how the development of Cuban education enabled it to become the foundation of the country's capacity to share. Sabine Lehr, inspired by her participation in the 12th Congress of the WCCES, decided to focus her PhD research on examining the experiences of people from Ghana who had studied in Cuba, and

their career trajectories. She was awarded her doctorate in 2008 from the University of Victoria in Canada, and we were happy to invite her to contribute her knowledge to the contextual chapters. I am grateful to co-editor Rosemary Preston for applying her sharp editorial skills, particularly in the final phase of the project, to help improve the writing style and conceptual cohesiveness of the chapters.

The chapters in sections 2, 3, and 4 develop case studies around the themes of overseas students studying in Cuba and returning home to work, and Cuban educators sharing their skills with partner countries. Through Jorge Corona's and Elvira Martín's insider knowledge, I met several of the authors, who contributed their interesting insights on themes such as the experiences of Cubans teaching in Africa (Marta Fernández Cabrera) and Jamaica (Emelina Pérez Herrera), organizing adult literacy programs (Jaime Canfux Gutiérrez), and directing the organization of education on the Isle of Youth where thousands of young international students received the gift of schooling and post-school education (Oscar Elejalde Villalón). Lidia Turner Martí, a friend and colleague from the mid-1990s even before I had met Jorge and Elvira, provides insight into the practices of important voluntary associations that help tens of thousands of Cuban teachers and many of their Latin American colleagues to improve professional and research skills. I met Melanie Springer in the 1990s on one of my visits to Cuba interviewing international students. My interaction with her introduces us to the little-known International School of Film and Television in provincial Cuba and the grounding that it laid for Melanie's subsequent work as a media consultant in the Caribbean.

Several contributors focus on African case studies. Christine Hatzky, who researched her postdoctoral project on Cuban educators in Angola in the 1980s, shares with us her important work on this historical case study. Rosemary Preston's chapter adds to our understanding of the significance of Cuban internationalism in Africa, as it is grounded in research that she had done in the 1980s investigating the destinations of Namibians who had studied in Cuba and other countries during the traumatic years surrounding the birth of their nation. Sabine Lehr provides insight into another area of Africa, with her chapter on the significance of the program of Cuban scholarships for Ghana. Through Sabine, we meet Ghanaian neurosurgeon Samuel Kaba Akoriyea, who reflects on his 18 years of school, university, and postgraduate education in Cuba.

Other contributors provide case studies in Latin America and the Caribbean. Boris Tristá Pérez of CEPES shares with us his specialist knowledge and experience of university management and development in Cuba and in a partner Latin American country, while Francisco Martínez Pérez draws on his expert knowledge of the overall structure and organization of the Cuban scholarship program. In case study chapters, I discuss my research on the implications of the Cuban scholarships and Cuban teachers for the English-speaking Caribbean. My professional work in Australia brought me into contact with Bob Boughton, an expert in adult literacy

education. His chapter discusses the Cuban contribution to a successful campaign and program of adult literacy in Timor Leste.

Alejandro Torres Saavedra helped by assigning two of his English language students at the Pedagogical University in Havana to work with me during my visits to Cuba on translating and writing up interview transcripts. He also helped to interview Lidia Turner Martí for her chapter, and assisted in translating it. He assisted Steven Smith of the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) while he was carrying out a research study in Havana, to visit many of the Cuban participants to help them complete tasks associated with the book. QUT has assisted me by giving me periods of study leave to pursue this research as well as some financial support for a few hours of research assistant time, and I thank Vinathe Sharma-Brymer for her work on the references.

Lastly, our book commemorates and celebrates the life of our colleague Marina Majoli Viani, who died in 2004. She was a professor of biotechnology at the University of Havana and researcher in the FLACSO-Cuba program of Cuban studies for overseas students (<http://internationaldevelopmentstudies.artsandsocialsciences.dal.ca/Study%20Abroad/Cuba.php>). Her research related to the impact of science and technology on Cuban society and development, and she contributed much of the material on Cuba's internationalism in health services that we present in chapter 1. Marina loved and deeply understood the ideals and global significance of the Cuban revolution and communicated this in an unforgettable way to visitors, including myself. This book is dedicated to her inspirational internationalist spirit. Together, editors, authors, and contributors from eight countries have demonstrated in this project what internationalism is able to achieve.

Abbreviations

ACS	Association for Caribbean Studies
AEC	Asociación de los Estados del Caribe
AELAC	Asociación de Educadores de Latinoamérica y el Caribe
AET	Africa Education Trust
AJOL	African Journals Online
ALADI	Asociación Latinoamericana de Integración
ALBA	Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América
ALCA	Acuerdo de Libre Comercio para las Américas
ANC	African National Congress
ANZCIES	Australia and New Zealand International and Comparative Education Society
APC	Asociación de Pedagogos de Cuba
BAICE	British Association for International and Comparative Education
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CA	California
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CDR	Comité para la Defensa de la Revolución
CEA	Centro de Estudios de América
CECE	Comité Estatal de Colaboración Económica
CELAEE	Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos de Educación Especial
CELEP	Centro de Referencia Latinoamericano para la Educación Preescolar
CEPES	Centro de Estudios para el Perfeccionamiento de la Educación Superior
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIES	Comparative and International Education society
CITMA	Ministerio de Ciencia, Tecnología y Medio Ambiente
CMEA	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
COMECOM	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CPE	Certificate of Primary Education
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
CUJAE	Instituto Superior Politécnico José Antonio Echeverría

CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DR	Democratic Republic
DFID	Department for International Development
DVD	Digital Versatile Disc
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EFA	Education for All
ELAM	Escuela Latinoamericana de Medicina
ESBEC	Escuela Secundaria Básica en el Campo
FALANTIL	Forças Armadas de Libertação de Timor-Leste
FCE	Forum des Chefs d'Equipe
FCP	Fundamentos de los Conocimientos Políticos
FDTL	Forças de Defesa de Timor Leste
FEU	Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios
FNLA	Frente Nacional para a Libertação de Angola
FOCAC	Forum on China–Africa Cooperation
FNLA	Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola
FRETILIN	Frente Revolucionária do Timor Leste Independente.
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GEI	Grupo Especial de Instrucción
GELI	Griffith English Language Institute
GHASUC	Ghanaian Students Union in Cuba
GNI	Gross National Income
GNP	Gross National Product
GSAT	Grade Six Achievement Test
HDI	Human Development Index
HEART	Human Employment and Resource Training
HND	Higher National Diploma
HRD	Human Resource Development
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
I/NGO	International Non Government Organisation
IAU	Inter American University
IBON	IBON Foundation
ICAP	Instituto Cubano de Amistad con Los Pueblos
ICCP	Instituto Central de Ciencias Pedagógicas
IESALC	Instituto Internacional de la Unesco para la Educación Superior en América Latina y el Caribe.
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INCED	International Centre for Education in Development
INDER	Instituto nacional para Deporte y Recreación
INIDE	Instituto Nacional para Investigação e Desenvolvimento da Educação

INTRAC	International NGO Training and Research Centre
IPLAC	Instituto Pedagógico Latinoamericano y Caribeño
IPUEC	Instituto Pre-Universitario en el Campo
ISA	Institute of the Arts
ISCAH	Instituto Superior de Ciencias Agropecuarias Habana
ISCF	Instituto Superior de Cultura Física Manuel Fajardo
ISP	Instituto Superior Pedagógico
LA	Laos
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MASTEP	Mathematics and Science Teacher Enhancement Programme
MDG	Millenium Development Goals
MED	Ministério da Educação
MEDICC	Medical Education Cooperation with Cuba
MEP	Ministerio de Economía y Planificación
MERCOSUR	Mercado Común del Sur
MES	Ministerio de Educación Superior
MIC	Ministerio de la Informática y las Comunicaciones
MINCULT	Ministerio de Cultura
MINED	Minsterio de Educación
MINFAR	Ministerio de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias
MININT	Ministerio del Interior
MINREX	Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
MINSAP	Ministerio de Salud Pública
MINVEC	Ministerio para la Inversión Extranjera y la Colaboración Económica
MPLA	Movimiento para a Libertação de Angola
NDP	National Development Plan
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NISER	Namibian Institute for Social and Economic Research
NJ	New Jersey
NORRAG	Network for Policy Review Research and Advice on Education and Training
NY	New York
OAS	Organization of American States
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OREALC	Oficina Regional de Educación para América Latina y el Caribe
PCC	Partido Comunista de Cuba
PG	Post Graduate
PIS	Programa Integral de Salud
PLAN	People's Liberation Army of Namibia

PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
RPA	República de Angola
RDTL	República Democrática de Timor-Leste
REDEES	Red de Estudios sobre la Educación Superior
S&T	Science and Technology
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SAF	South African Forces
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SE	South East
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SSC	Student Solidarity Council
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation
TV	Television
UAJMS	Universidad Autónoma Juan Misael Saracho
UCLV	Universidad Central de las Villas
UG	Under Graduate
UK	United Kingdom
UKFIET	UK Forum for International Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNE	University of New England
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIN	United Nations Institute for Namibia
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
UNTL	Universidade Nacional de Timor-Leste
UNVTCN	United Nations Vocational Training Centre for Namibia
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UVic	University of Victoria
UWI	University of the West Indies
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WCCES	World Council of Comparative Education Societies
WI	Wisconsin
WP	Working Paper