Education and Peacebuilding: from 'conflict-analysis' to 'conflict transformation'?

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Content

1. Introduction

This essay provides a brief summary of three ways in which we can think about the role of education in conflict-affected societies. In broad terms they represent areas that have gained greater attention over the past decade in international development discourses, although their roots go back to at least the Second World War. Each represents a slightly different perspective arising from a common concern about the way that violent conflict affects the lives of children and their right to education.

The first represents a concern for the protection of children and a response to the negative impacts of conflict, including attacks on education itself. To some extent this is primarily a humanitarian motivation. The second represents a concern that education is provided in a way that 'does no harm'. That is, education should be sensitive to sources of conflict in the society in which it is situated and is provided in a way that does not make antagonisms or animosities worse. To some extent this could be considered a slightly pessimistic view of development that characterises education as an essentially conservative mechanism to reproduce existing power relations within society. The third represents a view that education can 'make a difference', for example by contributing to transformations within conflict-affected societies that might make peace possible and more likely to endure. This could be regarded as a more optimistic view of the role of education in development, although it also has significant challenges for current aid orthodoxies and the ideological positions adopted by international donors and development agencies.

2. Three perspectives on education in conflict-affected societies

Education as a humanitarian response?

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been a key driver for international development over the past decade. For those working in education the focus has been primarily on the achievement of the MDGs related to universal primary education and gender equality. When the MDGs were launched in 2000 it was recognized that there are many barriers to the achievement of universal primary education including the existence of conflict. It has taken a decade for conflict to become the focus for the annual report that monitors pro-

gress. However, the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2011 'The Hidden Crisis: education and armed conflict' is now the most comprehensive publication in the field and estimates that 28 million children live in conflict-affected countries (42 percent of the world total of children out of school).

Concerns about the impact of violent conflict and war on children have received greater attention ever since the Machel Report 'Impact of Armed Conflict on Children' commissioned by the UN Secretary-General in 1996. The report identified a number of important implications for the education sector including the provision of education of refugees and displaced persons, strategies to prevent the use of child soldiers, protection for girls against sex crimes, landmine education and trauma counselling. It provided the basis for a number of significant initiatives, such as landmine awareness programmes and many of the issues identified by the report have become specialised areas in the field of international development.

Arguments were also made that education should be an integral part of humanitarian responses. Attention was drawn to the fact that children should not lose their fundamental right to education simply because they live in the midst of a conflict. It has been argued that education is an important factor in the physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection of children during conflict. By providing a sense of stability education may ease the psychosocial impact of conflict. A safe learning environment may shield them from the everyday physical violence of a conflict whilst also conveying life-saving information on how to protect oneself from danger. Education can also provide cognitive protection by supporting intellectual development through the teaching of literacy and numeracy, and in some cases, conflict resolution and peacebuilding skills.

This area has developed significantly since the World Education Forum in 2000. The subsequent 'Dakar Framework for Action' included an explicit call for donor support to the field now known as 'education in emergencies'. An important initiative was the formation of the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) led by UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, Norwegian Refugee Council, CARE International and the Save the Children Alliance. INEE does not have the mandate to implement or co-ordinate during crises, but enables members to share information and encourages collaboration. An important goal for INEE has been to define minimum standards for education in emergencies and these standards are currently being used in over 60 countries. Additionally, the UNESCO Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) has provided research, training and publications with a focus on education in emergencies and reconstruction.

However, there is still debate about the inclusion of education in frontline humanitarian aid responses. Reflecting on a decade of development in this area there are a number of issues that remain unresolved. It is clear that the argument for the inclusion of education in humanitarian responses was borne out of a genuine concern to protect children in very difficult circumstances and the mobilization of an international network (INEE) in support of this has been impressive. However, the evidence suggests that, whilst the argument may have been won amongst those involved in education and emergencies networks, those working within other sectors have still to be convinced. The EFA GMR 2011 highlights how despite a decade of advocacy education still receives only 2 percent of humanitarian aid and receives the lowest response to funds requested when compared to food, health, shelter, water and sanitation.

Links & Literature

Education for All Global Monitoring Report
UNESCO | 2011

The Machel Reports
Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)

International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP)

This picture is confirmed by field office reports of difficulties in competing with security, governance, economic and other social sectors during and after conflict. Education continues to be perceived as part of longer-term development, rather than immediate humanitarian response. Part of the problem is that the arguments that field workers use to justify access to more funding for education during the humanitarian phase are more about the need for earlier engagement with longer-term issues (such as gathering accurate data, assessing whether and how to reform education, developing better capacity), rather than do anything significantly different. Their concerns are that rebuilding the education system during the emergency response period may reproduce old problems such as unequal access and leave legacies that are more difficult to redress in later development phases. So, perhaps the argument is less about accessing humanitarian funds to do things differently in the emergency phase, but accessing sufficient funding for earlier engagement in reconstruction from a development and peacebuilding perspective.

It could also be argued that the inclusion of conflict-affected contexts within the broader concept of 'education and emergencies' has not been helpful from a peacebuilding perspective. Whilst conflicts undoubtedly create crises and lead to situations similar to other emergencies (for example, refugees, displaced persons and destruction of infrastructure), it is conceptually confusing to suggest that understanding the role of an education system during or after conflict is the same as responding to humanitarian or natural disasters such as famine, health epidemics, earthquake, floods or tsunamis. Not only is each context be distinctive, but there should be clarity about the frame of analysis that we are applying. Similarly, the use of the term 'fragility' to understand the role of education in conflict-affected societies has been an unhelpful distraction. The term gained some currency in international development discourses as a means of highlighting the importance of understanding the role of governance, but the term lacks definition, is conceptually weak and was an unsuccessful attempt to introduce an alternative term to 'failed' and 'fragile states' that national governments find pejorative and unacceptable.

Conflict-analysis of education and 'do no harm'

The past decade has also seen an emphasis on the need for international aid to 'do no harm'. In the field of education this has included the development of 'conflict-sensitive' approaches to education. An important study by Bush and Saltarelli (2000) published by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre concerned the 'two faces' of education in ethnic conflict'. The report drew on a number of international examples to highlight how education can fuel conflict, for example, through segregated education that maintains inequality between groups, unequal access to education or the manipulation of history and textbooks. Subsequent studies also highlighted aspects of education that have implications for conflict, including the reconstruction of education systems; links between gender and violence; and aspects of schooling linked to violence. This opened up debate about coordination and the role of international development agencies and led to the identification of a more explicit research agenda.

Systematic analysis of education systems from a conflict perspective is still an underdeveloped area. There are many entry points to the various levels of an education system. These include a critical analysis of the political ideology driving a system, as well as its legislative, structural and administrative features. These may have implications for non-discrimination and equal access to education. The most contentious challenge in terms of international development is to find a way of raising critical questions about the form and content of education and its implications for relations between peoples, groups and nations. The difficulty will be in finding ways for this to be accepted internationally as a legitimate

concern as part of improving the quality of education. At the practical level, there are many aspects of curriculum that have a bearing on conflict, including the extent to which teaching methods encourage 'critical thinking'. Areas of the curriculum related to identity are sometimes referred to as 'national subjects', in many instances tightly controlled by governments and regarded as essential tools for nation building. The choice of language of instruction confers a power and prestige through its use in formal instruction. Not only is there a symbolic aspect, referring to status and visibility, but also a conceptual aspect referring to shared values and worldview expressed through and in that language. Another area is the teaching of history as a means of promoting particular versions of history, revising historical events or confronting the past in a critical way. Political dimensions in the way that geography is taught and the lexicon it uses for disputed territories can be problematic and the content of teaching material for areas such as culture, art, music and religious education often get drawn into controversy.

In contested societies, arguments over textbook content can also become cultural and ideological battlegrounds. Textbook review processes have a long history. For example, there were joint initiatives on French-German textbooks during the 1920s; German-Polish cooperation following the Second World War; and a US-Soviet textbook project in the 1970s. A project reviewing Palestinian and Israeli projects has been underway for some years. Further examples include concerns raised by China and Korea about the treatment of World War II in Japanese textbooks and a critique of international assistance for the replacement of textbooks in Afghanistan.

However, there has also been a concern that an emphasis on conflict analysis highlights potentially negative aspects of education provision. From a practical perspective some aid workers suggest that this makes it more difficult to persuade donors to invest in education in conflict-affected countries. Others suggest that it makes it difficult to maintain a positive relationship with local education officials and underplays the contribution that education can make to 'peacebuilding'.

Links & Literature

The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Towards a peacebuilding education for children
Bush, Kenneth D. | Innocenti Insight 4 | 2000

Textbooks and Conflicts. Experiences from the Work of the Georg-Eckert-Institute for International Textbook Research
Wolfgang Höpken | 2005

Learning Each Other's History: Palestinians and Israelis
Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME) | 2003

Nation Building Is Not for All: The Politics of Education in Afghanistan
Antonio Giustozzi | AAN Thematic Report 02/2010

Education and peacebuilding

The concept of 'peacebuilding' has received renewed attention following the UN Secretary General's call for the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in 2006. These structures have emerged because of concerns to prevent relapses in the aftermath of conflict. They provide support to countries in the immediate post-conflict period mainly through funding for political, governance, security and macroeconomic reforms. However, observers recommend that focusing on social policies such as education and healthcare, as opposed to macroeconomic reforms, is especially important for preserving peace in countries that have emerged from civil conflict. Others also highlight the limitations and sometimes negative effects of peacebuilding that focuses exclusively on electoral and economic reforms. In 2010 the PBF had funds of US$360 million and was supporting more than 150 projects in 18 countries, but missed the opportunity for early engagement with social programming, such as education which had received less than 14 percent of its funds.

It is probably fair to say that in the field of education the past decade has seen more concern with conflict analysis than the concept of peacebuilding. The role of education is often stereotyped as 'peace education', perceived to involve working with children and youth on peace education programmes for personal development, inter-group contact and conflict resolution techniques. However, there have been a number of developments over the past decade that should encourage us to revisit the broader contribution of education to peacebuilding. For example, 'Rewrite the Future' was an international campaign by the Save the Children Alliance that took place over a three-year period (2006-09) to focus attention on education provision for children in conflict-affected states. The campaign also drew on research by Dupuy (2008) that 'of the 37 full peace agreements signed between 1989 and 2005 that are publicly available, 11 make no mention of education at all. Even in those that do include education, there is great variation in the way it is perceived and addressed in terms of security, protection, economic development or socio-political issues.' This is a reminder that peace agreements may bring an end to hostilities, but more often are only transitional events that mark the 'transformation' of conflicts rather than their 'resolution'. The distinction by Galtung between negative peace (the absence of violence) and positive peace (structural changes that address social injustice) is particularly relevant here and suggests a number of ways that education might make a positive contribution to peacebuilding.

Firstly, there is the role that has already been identified for education in terms of providing education services. The most common forms of investment are programmes related to access and quality of education. Initiatives to improve access to education (e.g. 'back to school' programmes) are often a key feature of post-conflict recovery. These can provide an early 'peace dividend' through the reconstruction and return to normal functioning of the education system. However, attention to access can also serve as an important preventative strategy before, during and after conflict by addressing inequalities that may exacerbate grievances between groups within society.

Links & Literature

Unites Nations – Peacebuilding Commission

Save the Children – Rewrite the Future

Education in Peace Agreements, 1989-2005
Kendra E. Depuy | Conflict Resolution
Quarterly, vol 26, no. 2 | 2008

Secondly, is the need to give more attention to education sector reform. This is especially important in post-conflict situations where opportunities arise to raise questions about the extent to which the education system will reproduce the previous social order or provide the basis for new forms of power relations. Early engagement with this issue may be particularly important, since the window of opportunity to initiate change in the immediate post-conflict period is limited. The UN peacebuilding architecture may have an important role in seeding such work even in the early post-conflict phase.

Thirdly, is the contribution that education can make to conflict transformation within society. Education can assist transformation by responding directly to impacts of conflict, for example, through provision of 'catch up' or accelerated learning programmes as part of Demobilization Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) in the post-conflict phase. These may be of limited duration and affect only certain sections of the population, but education can also play a role in dealing with the legacies of conflict and there is a growing literature about the role of education in truth, reconciliation and transitional justice processes. However, the potential for education to contribute to other reform processes extends beyond basic and formal education. Peacebuilding theory highlights the need for transformation processes related to security sector reform, political institutions, economic regeneration and social development within post-conflict societies. The education system at all levels has an important role to play in underpinning these transformations with human rights values and commitment to non-violence. The reform of policing, the justice system and political institutions

creates a rationale to address these issues with children and young people as part of civic and citizenship education. Programmes that involve technical and vocational education with children and young people also need to be aligned and consistent with the vision for post-conflict economic development. There is often a need for education that addresses deep-seated social and cultural issues, the role of the media or the relationship between religion and state institutions. An added benefit of addressing these issues with children and young people is the impact they can have on their parents.

The past decade has witnessed many examples where opportunities have been missed to consider how education is important for peacebuilding. One of the most striking is the way in which the creation of devolved political entities in the Dayton Agreement has led to a highly politicised and fragmented education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nepal will face similar challenges about the balance of power between centralised and devolved control of schooling as part of a commitment in the peace agreement to develop a federalist constitution. Overall, the key message is that early engagement with these issues from a peacebuilding perspective is crucial.

3. Future challenges?

Two significant challenges that have become increasingly important over the past decade concern the relationship between education, aid and security and the implications for aid and development agencies of a shift from 'doing no harm' to proactive peacebuilding.

Education, aid and security

The final decades of the twentieth century witnessed a number of significant world events such as the ending of apartheid in South Africa, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the democratisa-tion of former communist states in Eastern Europe, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of new peace agreements in longstanding conflicts. However, the defi-ning event of the past decade was undoubtedly the events of 9/11 and the subsequent im-pact it has had in bringing the global security to the top of the international development agenda. This is evidenced by the most recent World Development Report (2011) on Conflict, Security and Development. It is also reflected in the latest EFA GMR in two main ways.

Firstly, the EFA GMR reports on an increasing number of attacks on education that use political and military violen-ce against education staff, students, teachers unions, go-vernment officials and institutions. UNESCO has also pro-duced a report on 'Protecting Education from Attack' that explores possible motives, responses and prevention stra-tegies including armed protection, community defence and strengthening international monitoring systems and hu-manitarian law. Secondly, the report highlights concerns about links between aid and security. It identifies twenty-one developing countries that are spending more on arms and the military than on primary schools and presents evi-

Links & Literature

World Development Report 2011
Worldbank | 2011

Protecting Education From Attack
UNESCO | 2010

Education under Attack
UNESCO | 2010

dence that the amount of aid to certain countries may be driven more by global security concerns rather than poverty and need. The merging of national security concerns and in-ternational development policies is perhaps the greatest challenge for those in both the de-velopment and peacebuilding fields. It highlights the use of education to 'win hearts and minds' as part of counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan and raises concerns about the confusion of roles between military and aid personnel.

Challenges for aid agencies and development organizations

The change in security context over the past decade also creates new challenges for aid agencies and development organizations. Again there are two main dimensions to this. Firstly, there is growing awareness amongst donors that a purely technical approach to programming is insufficient in the political environments present in situations of conflict. This has led to more emphasis on the need for political economy analysis (PEA) of the education sector. 'There is increasing recognition that blockages for effective reform at the sectoral level (including for delivery, planning and procurement) can be political and that technical solutions alone may not be enough. Governance of a sector, and the way in which politics and institutions interact within that sector, will in practice have a critical impact on sector policies and services' (Foresti and Wild, 2009).

Secondly, the changing context and increased emphasis on the global security agenda will require aid agencies to make more explicit choices about how they position themselves and their work. Humanitarian interventions suggest time-limited emergency responses to humanitarian crises and natural disasters some of which will be caused by conflict. Development assistance that adopts a 'conflict sensitive' approach has been encouraged by both the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the OECD DAC Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and suggests only a degree of intervention that 'does no harm'. However, the centrality of the concept of 'conflict transformation' suggests that agencies with a commitment to peacebuilding will adopt a more interventionist stance. Development informed by political analysis inevitably means making decisions based on judgments about what is best from peacebuilding perspective and these may not always be consistent with the views of national governments or the Paris principles.

Links & Literature

Analysing Governance and Political Economy in Sectors – Joint Donor Workshop
Workshop Report | Foresti and Wild | ODI | 2009

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